

3rd Infantry Division Operations

The Surge



OIF 2007- 2008

“Rock of the Marne”

Foreword

The United States Army formed the 3rd Infantry Division in November 1917 and eight short months later the Division answered the nation's call to fight in World War I. There, while holding the banks of the Marne River in France, it earned its nickname "The Rock of the Marne."

In the 90 years that followed, Dog Faced Soldiers continued to answer the call in World War II, Korea, Kuwait, and the Balkans. In each conflict, Marne men and women earned magnificent reputations for valor, and 51 earned the Medal of Honor.

Every day on the battlefield I tell the Soldiers they have a choice in life – they can make history or read history and the Soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division certainly made history during the Division's third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Most of the Division, to include the Headquarters, deployed in support of "The Surge," a bold initiative by the President of the United States to increase the number of

boots on the ground in order to more aggressively combat the enemy. The 3rd Infantry Division Headquarters stood up Multi-National Division – Center to control Baghdad’s southern belts – the Mahmudiyah and Mada’in Qadas – and the four southern provinces of Babil, Karbala, Najaf, and Wasit. When the Division arrived in early 2007, attacks averaged 25 per day and by the summer of 2008, the number was less than two per day.

During the 15 month deployment the conversation with Iraqis changed. Security was no longer their concern. Rather, stability became the number one priority. Iraqis asked for jobs, services, and governance, and Marine Soldiers gave them what they needed. Soldiers helped fix water pumps. They provided electricity. And they worked with local councils from at grass roots level.

The Surge gave our Nation the combat power to take the fight to the enemy, but in Multi-National Division – Center. Our Soldiers did not commute to work. We built over 60 patrol bases so Soldiers lived among the Iraqi people in order to best meet their needs. Dog Face Soldiers came to represent freedom from oppression. As Soldiers moved forward, the Iraqi people stepped up to take control of their own security. The Sons of Iraq program grew to take responsibility for protection of their own neighborhoods and together, our Soldiers, the Iraqi Security Forces, and the Iraqi people took large leaps forward.

Our work is never done, but this book captures the great work of our magnificent Soldiers during this brief moment in history. During this deployment, the Soldiers experienced the fifth anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and many of the Dog Face Soldiers remember crossing the border in March 2003. Many of them have deployed twice or three time in support of defending our Nation, and yet the Marine Division met its retention objective for fiscal year 2008 six months early while in combat for the third time. Our Army is not breaking, but we give all credit

to our Families who support us – we could not do it without them. And we will never forget those that made the ultimate sacrifice – their Families are forever members of the Marne Family.

Years from now, our Soldiers will sit with their grandchildren on their lap and show them a map of world. Iraq will be a country free from fear and a nation at peace with its neighbors. It will be an ally on the war on terror. Our Soldiers will be able to point to this country and tell their grandchildren, “I did that.”

Our Soldiers are doing more than reading the history in this book – they wrote it. It is dedicated to them and to their amazing Families who supported them every step of the way. Some are content to read history, but others are determined to make it. This is their story.

Rock of the Marne!

Rick Lynch
Major General, US Army
Commanding

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Chapter 1

Transition In Advance of the Surge

Little changes from summer to summer in Georgia and 2006 was no different. One exception was Georgia's very own 3rd Infantry Division (3ID). The division was transforming right there on the parade fields of Forts Stewart, Benning, and Hunter Army Airfield. What happened to the famed "Rock of the Marne" was unique in everyone's memory. Whole brigades, with battalions in kind, transferred command. The team that had led the division on its second Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment relinquished command to a new team.

The men and women that took the colors on those green fields were destined to return the division to Iraq for an unprecedented third deployment but that was not a certainty just yet. Still, there was a lot of work to do. The Army had its way of taking recently returned units, overhauling them, and then bringing them back to the fight, just in the nick of time for the next venture to war.

The Army's "Force Generation" or ARFORGEN plan required recently returned units to follow a prescribed regimen

in order to return to a reasonable state of what it described as "combat readiness." Each brigade and the division's headquarters would receive new personnel, be issued new equipment, and then train in a set sequence. Many of its veterans had remained in the division following one, or even two, deployments since the war began in March of 2003. So, "getting ready" had become the norm for Soldiers in southeastern and far western Georgia.

The division was well-practiced at deployments. There was a real sense of urgency. Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) was in its fourth year. That summer saw the continuance of violence that shocked onlookers. Iraq was boiling over in what some experts and media called a sectarian civil war. Masses of Iraqis had abandoned their homes in the nation's capitol. A decades old feud had been reignited following an attack on the al Askari "Golden Mosque" in Samarra in February of 2006. Retaliation by majority Shiites on minority Sunnis was nearly immediate and violence rippled outward across the land. Sunni and Shia Muslims were killing each other in large numbers. News reports said that headless bodies littered the streets. There were mass kidnappings and subsequent executions. Daily, brutal street battles were broadcast via television around the world. No one, not the new Shia-dominated government or the powerful coalition forces, seemed to be in control. It was as if no one was capable of holding Iraq together.

The spiral downward toward complete failure promised dire strategic consequences for the U.S. and perhaps the entire world. Al-Qaeda had begun to experiment with horrifying weapons. The worldwide terror network had combined poisonous chlorine with explosives, to create an urban nightmare. Al-Qaeda had planted its fangs in the nation's flesh.

Essential services were almost nonexistent. Disease fol-

lowed the absence of healthcare, fresh drinking water, and adequate electrical power. There were rumors of widespread cholera outbreaks. There was rampant crime which compounded a desperate humanitarian condition with sectarian warfare, and ineffective government. Something had to change.

That the 3rd Infantry Division would return to Iraq was not in question. It was simply a matter of time. Could Iraq wait? The answer seemed to be that it could not. The next question was "how soon would the division deploy, and for how long?"

There was no deployment order, but if one came, the 3ID would be ready, that's what ARFORGEN was all about. The 1st Brigade Combat Team was set to deploy first in early 2007. Next available was the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, followed by the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, and the 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade. So, as new Soldiers arrived, they were simply directed to report to the unit which would deploy next.

The same pattern followed for new equipment. Motor pools, the parking lots usually packed with tanks and armored personnel carriers, sat empty for units not first in line. Their equipment was either undergoing a massive, yet necessary overhaul, or had not yet been issued. Soldiers were being issued new uniforms and personal protective equipment assembled from years of lessons learned, research, and development.

In the meantime, commanders readied their units for the cycle of training that would build confident and competent teams that were ready to fight. Training included a cycle of gunnery, individual and crew-served weapons qualifications. Everything from first aid to complex, multiunit attacks needed focused training and practice. By design, the capstone training event for every unit was a month-long deployment to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. NTC had mock Iraqi villages complete with role playing civilians and an oppos-

ing force to forge the team on the eve of its OIF mission. It all made sense and the model would work again. That was the plan.

As for how long Soldiers would be gone...typically, deployments lasted one year. That's twelve months - 365 days. A Soldier's life and his or her Family's decisions were planned around that assumption. Deployments are always hard. Kids would have to go without an adult to help with homework. Spouses would go without a mate for moral support. Parents to new Soldiers would have to let go, trusting God and Army training would preserve their loved ones once deployed. Experience taught the Soldiers and their Families to be flexible and to anticipate change. Hearts could be broken when return dates slipped. It had happened in 2003, and it could easily happen again during the next deployment.

With that in mind, the division's leaders began to instill a culture of realistic expectations. Commanders encouraged their Soldiers to savor their time with loved ones. Soldiers were reminded that the next birthday celebration, the next holiday, might be the last one for a while. To take advantage of every minute everyone learned to "make memories" Marne-style. "Hug each other like you mean it," was a common encouragement. Instead of planning for a twelve month deployment, commanders told troops to expect eighteen months in Iraq. That raised eyebrows. Eighteen months was long time by any standard.

The "hug them like you mean it" philosophy became a practice and a mindset. In July, the division celebrated Independence Day with a festival and concert that featured, among others, Country and Western sensation LeAnn Rhymes and the Michael Scott Band. November 2006 marked the Division's 89th birthday. A first ever and large scale celebration labeled

"Marne Week," welcomed old timers and young families to revel in honor of the Division's distinguished history. Marne Week was a three day extravaganza that included a division run, intramural sports, pass in review, a carnival, and a dining-in in downtown Savannah. In December of 2006, the Division held a boxing smoker that matched Soldier-boxers at Newman Gym on Fort Stewart. Soldiers trained with professional coaches and no detail was spared in the Las Vegas-like amateur bout. Thousands of Dog Face Soldiers joined together beneath one roof to cheer their fighters on. It was a fitting preview of the assembly the Division would field for battle in Iraq in a matter of months. Little did anyone know that time had already nearly run out.

A few weeks later the march to Iraq began in earnest for everyone in the Marne Division.

Chapter 2

1st Brigade Joins the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in the West

As 2006 came to a close, the 1st Brigade Combat Team, known as "Raiders," were deep in their training cycle. Experts in large unit training transformed the backwoods of Fort Stewart into a miniature, mobile National Training Center. The concept wasn't new but it was rarely done. For the Raiders and their Families there was an immediate benefit. The Army's offer to train and bring the NTC to Fort Stewart from Fort Irwin, California was welcomed. By training at home, Soldiers got more time to spend with their Families. The arrangement also eliminated time spent loading and unloading railcars and airplanes. The NTC cadre, manned with a host of former 3ID Soldiers, were accompanied by Arab language speaking role players and Soldier-actors that gave the brigade a competitive, opposing force experience, similar to fighting insurgents among civilians in Iraq. Trucks marked with "UN" signs crisscrossed the numerous tank trails on post and

created the dynamic of traffic in numerous "villages" prepared for training. It was as realistic as training could be. Then came the inevitable.

An official announcement for the brigade's deployment came from the Department of Defense before it had finished field training. The 1st Brigade was ordered to deploy to Iraq in January 2007. The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) was operating in Iraq's westernmost province and commanded the Multi-National Force - West. The Raiders would join the MNF-W in the Anbar Province and would help chart a new course for history with United States Marines.

The herculean effort to move troops and equipment was impressive. Ships were loaded. Equipment was packed and shipped. Then, Soldiers bade farewell to loved ones before boarding buses bound for Hunter Army Airfield. There they were served one last meal on American soil before filing through a cordon of flag-waving patriots to jetliners, bound for Kuwait and ultimately, war.

At Camp Buehring in Kuwait, Soldiers practiced battle drills with small units. Each learned the latest techniques to spot and counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). IEDs, the weapon of choice for insurgents, represented the greatest threat to coalition forces. They were sometimes made from old artillery, other times from a combination of fuel and fertilizer coupled with an electrical or mechanical trigger.

Equipment was readied and the long journey to Ramadi, the Anbar provincial capital, began. The battlefield had changed and the enemy had moved into urban areas. Tanks and heavy tracked vehicles, an advantage over the enemy in two previous Operation Iraqi Freedom deployments, was lessened. Tank crews and artillerymen had to learn infantry skills. They needed to know how to form a line of battle dismounted. Instead

of forming wedges with heavy armor on an open desert they learned to "stack" Soldiers in files to enter buildings. Soldiers learned how to quick fire their individual weapons from the hip, and patrol without their armored vehicles. Drivers were trained and tested on the heavier armored wheeled vehicles not available at home station. Canals and narrow roads, potholes and human traffic, coupled with limited visibility had contributed to vehicle roll over accidents so crew drills were practiced in hydraulic vehicle simulators. Safety was the focal point for everything that unit leaders planned to do but they each understood that they could not be averse to risk and still accomplish their missions.

In Ramadi

The Anbar province was notorious as a sanctuary for al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Even the name "Ramadi" held a certain air of foreboding in those days. Hard battles had been fought in the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah for three years. AQI even named Ramadi the capital of the Islamic State of Iraq and had conducted a parade in October of 2006 to illustrate their point.

The majority Sunni population had been staunch opponents of the Shia led national government. The Raiders were about to confront a hateful enemy, a distrusting host, and a desperate social condition which tore at the fabric of national stability for all Iraq. The challenge to the 1st BCT was clear but first it had to get there. The brigade would move north by air and ground. Next, it would relieve a unit that had held its ground during the previous year. It would then fight the enemy on his home turf.

The relief in place and Transfer of Authority (TOA) is difficult in any condition. The outgoing unit must familiarize the incoming unit with the ground on which it will fight. New

Soldiers are coached on lessons that have been learned through blood and sweat. Relationships with the local population, fragile friendships built on time and trust, are passed to the new unit. No matter how detailed or how long the process, there is always risk. The enemy watches like a wolf in the night, well aware that a fresh unit is on unfamiliar ground. The new team is vulnerable without the benefit of time tested experience.

On February 18, 2007 the Raiders replaced the 1st Brigade Combat Team from the 1st Armored Division on a vast expanse of desert the size of New Hampshire called Area of Operation (AO) "Topeka" in the central Anbar province. The brigade's arrival was met immediately by increased attacks. Previously averaging 15 attacks per day, insurgents often launched complex attacks using mortars, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG), machineguns of all types, rifle fire, and improvised explosive devices. The year ahead promised to be difficult.

So, in those first weeks, the Raiders went to work on a campaign plan to claim and sustain positive momentum by addressing the pressing security, governance, and economic needs in Ramadi.

Chapter 3

A Change in Strategy, a Call for the Marne Division

While the 1st BCT was transiting through Kuwait, a small team from the Division's headquarters was also there on a completely different mission. In six short months, the Division was scheduled to deploy to Iraq as part of the normal replacement strategy for ground forces. The team was on a reconnaissance mission vital to setting the conditions for when the rest of the force arrived in the summer-time.

The 3rd Infantry Division was set to assume responsibility for an area north of the city of Baghdad that bordered Syria, Turkey, and Iran. It would replace the 25th Infantry Division at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Speicher near Tikrit and command Multi-National Division - North. In June of 2007, the two legendary divisions would conduct a transfer of authority and the 25th would go back to Hawaii.

That was the plan, but the winds were changing in Iraq and in

Washington. On January 10, 2007 President George W. Bush announced a new strategy for Iraq. The Government of Iraq had launched its own bold plan to save Baghdad and Iraq from civil war and anarchy. It was said that "as goes Baghdad, so goes Iraq" and Baghdad was near collapse. For its part, the President said that America would immediately offer more forces.

*"This is a strong commitment. But for it to succeed, our commanders say the Iraqis will need our help. So America will change our strategy to help the Iraqis carry out their campaign to put down sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad. This will require increasing American force levels. So I've committed more than 20,000 additional American troops to Iraq. The vast majority of them -- five brigades -- will be deployed to Baghdad. These troops will work alongside Iraqi units and be embedded in their formations. Our troops will have a well-defined mission: to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs." - **President George W. Bush***

The new strategy was quickly labeled the "Surge" and the men and women of the Marne Division, Families, and friends knew what it meant. Suddenly the six month road to war had detoured and now the headquarters set to work on a plan that would deliver "boots on the ground" by mid March, within six weeks.

The Division's command and staff were at the Battle Command Staff seminar at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas as part of the road to war training program already scheduled. Then, the official word came to deploy early. The operations staff converted a backroom in the Combined Arms Center School building into a war room. The academics seemed to come to a sudden stop as sleeves were literally and figuratively rolled up. All training would have to be "shifted left, moved up." All the planning and reconnaissance ef-

fort for the northern Iraq contingency was out the window.

The area of operations had changed. The Division's new mission would be to work alongside and in coordination with Iraqi Security Forces to interdict "accelerants" into Baghdad. "Accelerants" was the term given to material, explosives, weapons, ammunition - anything that could perpetuate conflict in the city. The Division was to defeat sectarian violence and secure the population in its area of operations in order to allow the Multi-National Division - Baghdad and Iraqi Security Forces to secure the capital. It would help create conditions for long term Iraqi self reliance. It was to form Multi-National Division - Center, a command that heretofore had not existed, from two brigades already deployed south of Baghdad. Then, more forces would be added, including brigades from the 3rd Infantry Division, as they flowed to Iraq on new deployment orders.

The Fort Benning based, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, also known as the "Sledgehammer" Brigade, was deployed to the NTC when word came of the abbreviated deployment schedule. It lost two months that it had expected to have for training, manning, and moving. Now, it had the daunting task of moving from a major training exercise right into a deployment for war.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, "Spartans," according to the ARFORGEN model, were in the "receiving manpower" phase of its "road to war." In the weeks ahead, it had to build its force, simultaneously train to standard, and still arrive in Iraq by the first week of June.

The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade, "Falcons," a critical component of the Division's combat power, would have the challenge of task organizing: moving forces around to perform a specific mission, train its force, package all its aircraft, and deploy to support the fight. Aviation had proven to be the decisive advantage over the insurgency. Clearly, the "Falcons" could not get to Iraq fast

enough.

Training was accelerated. The 2nd BCT, like the 1st BCT before it, conducted a mission rehearsal exercise at Fort Stewart rather than deploying to the NTC. The CAB continued to support brigades with their training like it would in Iraq, but it had no independent training event to ready itself for the upcoming mission.

The Battle Command Training Program cadre from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, responsible for drilling the division headquarters, descended on Wright Army Airfield where a model headquarters was fashioned in an old maintenance building. The command and staff huddled over newly issued equipment, grappled for a plan and an understanding of the battle space, the land and air above an area of responsibility, that it would assume. The clock was ticking and the sense of urgency was palpable. Soldiers were deploying with their equipment first to Truscott Air Terminal and then to Kuwait immediately after.

By the first week of March, the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team had boots on the ground in Iraq and it was building combat power in Kuwait. In Georgia, a flag casing ceremony was held at Marne Garden outside Building 1, the division headquarters, on March 8th, 2007. Veterans of the Division, including its oldest living Medal of Honor recipient, COL (Ret.) Charles P. Murray, local community leaders, media, and Families attended to show their unwavering support. The ceremony signaled the division's third deployment in four years. Two weeks later the headquarters and Special Troops Battalion was deployed. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team and 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade were readying to deploy for the coming fight.

Chapter 4

Building the Multinational Division - Center from the Ground Up

The first members of the 3rd Infantry Division headquarters arrived in Kuwait in February with embeds attached to the Multi-National Division Baghdad. Then more leadership arrived and all were sped forward to the Victory Base Complex. Victory Base was a massive palace complex that garrisoned thousands of coalition forces personnel west of Baghdad. On the other side of its turreted walls was Baghdad International Airport, the site of the division's main command post nearly four years earlier. The 3rd Infantry Division took its place in the Multi-National Forces - Iraq (MNF-I) area of operations under the Multi-National Corps - Iraq (MNC-I).

As was the case with all the surge forces, the 3ID was breaking new ground, setting up operations where there had been nothing. There were no unique standard operating procedures. The earth-yellow concrete box designated as its headquarters building had been a garrison to military transients, both friendly

and enemy, over the course of four years. Under Saddam Hussein, it had been a mint for printing currency. It had first garrisoned Iraqi Army forces then, after the invasion in 2003, US forces. It was essentially a hollow hulk ill prepared for service as a modern command and control center. The walled compound that surrounded it, nicknamed "Honor 51," was positioned a few hundred feet from where SFC Paul R. Smith had fallen in battle on April 4th, 2003 becoming the division's 51st Medal of Honor recipient.

As it directed troops in contact, the Division assumed responsibility for terrain and stood itself up. Around the clock, communications specialists, Soldiers and civilians, worked feverishly to assemble the arteries, some 12 miles of red and green wires, of the Multi-National Division - Center headquarters. Equipment and personnel continued to arrive, echelon by echelon, bringing the command to life.

The disadvantage of not being on the ground gradually was replaced by evermore clear assessments of the battle space by commanders already in position. What could not be learned of its mission and operating environment while half a world away, was gleaned from the units on the ground and plans were refined. There was a lot to catch up on. Aircraft shuttled commanders and planners to all corners of Iraq. The picture slowly came into focus.

The state of Mesopotamia

The area of operations for Multi-National Division - Center stretched from Saudi Arabia to Baghdad. Eventually, it grew to include a large portion of the border with Iran. It was the "land between the two rivers" or - in ancient terms, "Mesopotamia." The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers snaked south from Baghdad

through muddy banks, thick reeds, and marshes. Groves of date palm trees grew along the river bank villages. Man made canals channeled fresh water to crop fields. There were greenhouses, gardens, and farms. Cattle, goats, and sheep were herded over roads and through pasture. Factories sat defunct, often empty, their workers unemployed in want of cash to support families. There was scant hope and a wounded economy.

Infrastructure was neglected. There were fallen power lines. Oil, so vital to the economic strength of the entire nation, and gas lines were leaking and prone to fires. Damaged water pumping stations were insufficient. Weathered and war torn roads and bridges made public transportation hazardous or impassable. Schools lacked teachers because they were often too intimidated to teach. Doctors, dentists, veterinarians, and pharmacists were too few, leaving inadequate healthcare for the general population. Police forces were suspect at best, often accused of corruption. Some were alleged to be militia collaborators on a campaign to purge communities on behalf of the sectarian warlords.

Across Mesopotamia, Iraqis were pitted against each other. The conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims had been cultivated for years. Saddam's oppression of majority Shia had birthed bitterness and hostility. Al-Qaeda's attack on the Golden Mosque in February of 2006 had sparked a campaign of revenge. The whole future of Iraq was in jeopardy and the decisive battleground was right where MND-C stood, in the land between the two rivers.

Fractured Communities

The cities and provinces of Najaf, Karbala, and Babil held great significance to the masses of loyal Shia Muslims who had

called the region home for hundreds of years. About 90% of all Iraqis in Mesopotamia were Shia. Great shrines had stood as sacred monuments to devout believers. For ages, the tribes had subsisted, raised their families, navigated authority, and practiced their faith and culture, their way. Ornate palaces, the relative wealth of Sunnis and the clear poverty of Shia communities gave evidence that under Saddam the favored few jealously controlled all power. The discovery of mass graves left in the wake of his regime's collapse demonstrated to the world the price of opposition in the three decades under his Ba'ath party's rule. His fall offered all Iraqis a chance for freedom. As Iraq's new government stood, vicious enemies emerged. Inside Iraq's borders, men with extreme ideas, radical by every measure of humanity, sought to turn Iraq into an Islamic caliphate.

Most of the Sunni population in MND-C's area lived in a crescent shaped Baghdad suburb that ran southwest to east. The area was referred to as the "Baghdad Belts." During Saddam's regime, these belts had functioned as a sort of human wall that protected the capital from Saddam's enemies. Now, the Baghdad Belts had become hosts to al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) among other Sunni extremist entities. Many Sunnis in the Baghdad Belts had initially allied with AQI to fight the coalition. They mistakenly believed that AQI was a better alternative to the new Iraqi government. A victory by al-Qaeda over the coalition might hasten the return of Sunni domination in Iraq, or so it was believed. That gamble had proven harmful. Members of the extremist groups forbade simple pleasures and liberties that many Iraqis were fond of. They stole wives for themselves. They held court and punished people they claimed had broken Islamic law. They siphoned money from the local economy. They'd not provided essential services. The culture was becoming like Afghanistan under Taliban rule. This is how AQI

overplayed its hand. Sunnis resented their immersion into a world of unbridled violence, enslaved by foreign practitioners of a radical brand of Islam. Their expulsion proved a welcome relief but it would not be an easy undertaking.

Sunni neighborhoods were fortified. They'd been used as safe havens by terrorists so that they could move about freely and do as they pleased. Car-bombs used to attack Baghdad residents, coalition forces, and the government, were fashioned in garages inside the Belts. Terrorists used homes to plot attacks and hide caches. All the while, criminals perpetuated human suffering through torture, murder, kidnapping, robbery and smuggling.

Ready

On April 1st, 2007, the 3rd Infantry Division unfurled its colors on Iraqi soil for the third time in four years. In the following days and weeks, more units were attached to the young command. It would eventually include approximately 20,000 Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines.

Its command, the Multi-National Division - Center, was beginning to take shape. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division was the first combat unit assigned to the command. Shortly thereafter, came the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division. On April 24th, the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division based at FOB Kalsu joined MND-C, expanding the Division's sphere of responsibilities to the Babil province.

The Division's 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), with an air cavalry squadron from Fort Drum, arrived and shortly took to the skies for attack and support roles. The 214th Fires Brigade headquarters also arrived from Fort Sill, Oklahoma and

was assigned responsibility to control a base in the east called Camp Delta. Delta was home to coalition nation military units from El Salvador, Georgia, Lithuania, Romania, and Kazakhstan all part of Multi National Division - Center.

Smaller but equally important units called "enablers" were attached to the division so that it could conduct "full spectrum" operations. There was a Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal battalion, the 3rd Mobile Unit (EOD) from San Diego. It was later replaced by the 6th MU from Charleston, South Carolina. The 3rd Civil Affairs Battalion joined, later replaced by the 401st CA Battalion. More capabilities were added to the division including the 9th Psychological Operations Detachment, the 720th Military Police battalion from Fort Hood, the 479th Engineer Battalion, the 15th Air Support Operations Squadron, and the 302nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, a USAR unit based in California.

The most pressing need was combat power, and throughout April, May and June, 3rd Infantry Division units from Forts Benning, Stewart, and Hunter Army Airfield closed on Iraq and established their place within MND-C.

The success of the new campaign, intended to support the establishment of law and order in Baghdad, hinged on stopping the flow of accelerants to the capital city. Coalition forces were needed in the Baghdad Belts in order to clear a common enemy. To do so would require the commitment of an aggressive force in tandem with civil support. The plan born of these needs was dubbed "Marne Fortitude," and while it would have a lethal component, it promised that the region would have new hope, its people might have liberty, and freedom. TF Marne would help save Iraq from anarchy and civil war in its area. It would help return Iraq to a path to stability and democracy.

Just seven days after the division uncased its colors, ter-

rorists exploded a car bomb in Mahmudiyah killing 17 Iraqi civilians. The fight would have many fronts. Then on April 20th, a rocket attack, a common tactic for insurgents at the time, was launched on the Forward Operating Base also in Mahmudiyah. The enemy was well resourced and there was in fact a foreign supporter meddling in Mesopotamia.

On April 11th, the Department of Defense announced that all active component Army units currently deployed to Iraq would remain in theater for 15 months. Dog Face Soldiers were relieved. At least it was not the eighteen they'd expected. The long fight had just begun.

Chapter 5

Sledgehammer Brigade - First Marne Brigade of Surge

The 3rd (Sledgehammer) Brigade, consisting of 1-15 Infantry, 3-1 Cavalry, the 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, and the 203rd Brigade Support Battalion, moved north from Kuwait in the first week of April. For the time being, two battalions were detached from the brigade. Most of 2-69 Armor deployed to Rustimayah. The 1st Battalion, 10th Field Artillery was tasked to secure Camp Bucca, a prison that held thousands of the most hardened criminals in Iraq. It returned to the 3rd BCT in October.

Sledgehammer took up camp on the east side of the Tigris River in the open desert at an abandoned range complex called "Besmaya." Iraqi Army checkpoints secured an otherwise undeveloped military compound. The wind-swept desert offered little protection. Across the floor of the desert lay unexploded ordnance covered with inches of talcum-like sand.

Temperatures had climbed to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and

promised a punishing summer. Dust choked electronic equipment and wind storms cut visibility. The desert had a furnace hot feel. The little rain that came quickly turned roads to a soupy muck. Conditions were miserable but troops soldiered on. With the help of the Air Force's 557th Expeditionary Red Horse Battalion construction engineers, the base camp was transformed into a fully functional operating base named for its hearty occupants, "Forward Operating Base Hammer."

Sledgehammer adopted the tactic of positioning Soldiers in the communities so that they could protect the population. Logic followed that if the people felt secure, infrastructure would be repaired and the economy would improve. The conditions would be set and essential services, government, law and order, would be restored.

Commanders partnered with the Iraqi National Police leaders in the area. East of Baghdad, the 1st and 3rd National Police Brigade showed promise as a viable Iraqi led security force. It was woefully undermanned, poorly equipped, and barely trained. Still, the need for security was paramount and true security meant participation by Iraqi forces. Foot patrols in Salman Pak were combined with members of 1-15 Infantry and the Iraqi National Police. Success followed with the discovery of caches containing artillery rounds and other seeds used by insurgents to grow misery for the community. For the time being, the Sledgehammer brigade held positions at a patrol base called Assassin, a Joint Security Station in Salman Pak, and three Combat Outposts: Cashe, Cahill, Cleary and FOB Hammer.

Life at one of these forward bases was tough at first. Like FOB Hammer, outposts required substantial work. COP Cleary had been a government building and was adjacent to a rundown greenhouse. Cashe was located in Tuwaitha, south of Jisr Diyala. Cahill, the smallest of the three, had been a hunting club

security building during Saddam's regime north of Salman Pak.

Soldiers ate field rations and drank bottled water. Hot meals were initially delivered by truck. Innovative Soldier-carpenters crafted modest amenities for their all-in-one fighting positions, command post, bedroom, and gym. Field craft, the art of surviving in harsh conditions, was quickly learned and its secrets were handed down to "new guys" by veteran warriors on their second or third tour.

Vigilant sentries, sandbags, wire, and concrete barriers kept the enemy at bay, but curious children and well meaning neighbors showed quick interest in the new American guests. The buzz of insects, the smell of "chai" tea and the sound of prayer calls hovered over Sledgehammer Soldiers, sensations that were foreign now, but only for a while.

Chapter 6

Operation Commando Razor

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division was operating west of the Tigris River just south of Baghdad in a largely Sunni and still very dangerous area. The "Commandos" were making steady progress, reaching out to the public, securing populated areas in remote villages, countering Sunni extremists, and building the capability of Iraqi Security Forces.

On May 12th, a combined squad of seven U.S. Soldiers and one Iraqi soldier was attacked near a village they'd been assigned to protect. Five of the eight were killed and found, but three Soldiers were missing, their whereabouts unknown. Immediately, a massive search was launched across the Euphrates River Valley west of the city of Yusufiyah. The 2nd Brigade Combat Team launched a 24-hour operation called Commando Razor in order to find its missing Soldiers.

The body of the sixth American Soldier was found, but

two Soldiers remained missing. Every Soldier that could go searched day and night for the missing men. Military working dogs, the most sophisticated intelligence resources, unmanned aerial vehicles, helicopters, and airplanes participated. All available evidence was collected using sophisticated technology. Hundreds of suspects were detained and questioned by Iraqi and US military forces.

Commando Razor had become a large scale, deliberate clearance operation. Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device factories were found and destroyed. Al-Qaeda weapons caches, the lifeblood of an insurgent's supplies, were found and cleared. Numerous suspected insurgents, including men who were directly involved in the May 12th attack, were captured. Other terrorists, fearing their own capture, ran away ending their influence over the villages and tribes.

True to the Warrior Ethos, the "Commandos" had vowed to never leave a fallen comrade behind. Their loss strengthened their resolve. Where they'd fallen, a permanent outpost was constructed. The Iraqis in the community could see that the insurgents had not forced the departure of the American Soldiers.

The 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division redeployed to Fort Drum in October of 2007. The continued search effort for their two missing Soldiers passed to the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne (Air Assault) who joined Task Force Marne that fall. A permanent cell was established in MND-C with the sole purpose of continuing the collection of intelligence information and the search for our two missing Soldiers. Other deliberate operations were launched in support of the effort to find the missing men. Several terrorists, including the main leader of the attack were killed. Others were captured. The search continues until they are found and their Families and friends have closure.

Chapter 7

Spartan Brigade Begins Operations

Organizing for the Task

At Fort Stewart, the accelerated deployment timeline had caused shifts to the training plans for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team "Spartans." In February, the brigade conducted a mission rehearsal exercise with the cadre of the NTC at Fort Stewart. By the first week of June, it was moving into fighting positions in Iraq. On the 16th of June, it would be MND-C's main effort in the Baghdad Belts.

The Spartan's task organization changed and three of the brigade's battalions -- 1-9 Field Artillery, 3-7 Cavalry, and 1-64 Armor -- were attached to other major units across Iraq under Multinational Force - Iraq. 1-9 Field Artillery, minus one battery, was sent to Balad where it provided security for the massive logistics base, LSA Anaconda. 3-7 Cavalry, in Taji, was attached to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne

Division to clear AQI in Adhamiyah, a district in Baghdad. 1-64 Armor, located on the Victory Base Complex, supported the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in the Mansour District of Baghdad.

The Spartans received additional forces for its fight in the Baghdad Belts at various times. The 6-8 Cavalry Squadron of the 4th BCT, 3ID; the 1-40th Cavalry of the 4th BCT (Airborne) 25th Infantry; the 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 1st BCT, 3ID; the 1-187 Infantry, 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne (Air Assault) all served as part of the Spartan Brigade Combat Team.

The 1-30 Infantry remained attached to the Brigade along with its 2-3 Special Troops Battalion and 26th Brigade Support Battalion.

Condition Setting

In June, across Iraq, the Multi-National Corps - Iraq launched an offensive. The 2nd BCT was the fifth and final surge brigade. Its arrival gave the MND-C sufficient combat power to begin operations to clear al- Qaeda from safe havens in the Baghdad Belts.

The land between the Tigris and Euphrates River Valleys stretched south from Baghdad and through the city's outer urban ring creating a geographic, "central corridor." North and south highways emptied into the vast expanse of the Al-Hijarah desert connecting Iraq to the rest of the world. "Ratlines," roads that carried nefarious men with dangerous cargo, linked nests of terrorists to their prey in Baghdad itself.

Until June 14th, the "Surge" had been characterized by condition- setting operations. High above earth, electric eyes peered into the streets of villages day and night. Aircraft performed intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions. Com-

manders massed additional forces and planned the fight. The enemy could not see what was about to happen. The campaign to clear him from his hideout was set to begin. The time was ripe for change in the southern Baghdad Belts.

Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab had been home to well-off families three years earlier, but al-Qaeda had been able to occupy these towns without significant ISF or coalition forces to counter them. In those years of occupation, the enemy, namely the Abu Jurah terrorist network and al-Qaeda, had had time to prepare deadly traps. Whole buildings, called House Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (HBIED) were rigged to explode on contact, much like the vehicular version in use throughout Iraq. IEDs were positioned as mine fields. The enemy ruled the streets and understood how to use the ground for his tactical advantage.

On June 16th, Multi-National Division - Center launched Operation Marne Torch in order to defeat insurgents, deny them a sanctuary, and prevent the enemy from moving accelerants from Arab Jabour into Baghdad. Spearheading this fight from the ground were the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry and the 1st Squadron, 40th Cavalry along with elements of the Iraqi Army 6th Division.

The battle began with an attack by Air Force bombers striking suspected caches and cutting roads with four precision guided bombs in Area of Operations (AO) "Denali," part of Arab Jabour. Secondary explosions detected by video cameras high above targets confirmed that the B-1s had hit their mark. This technique would be repeated as often as necessary to keep troops on the ground from being exposed to IED threats unnecessarily. On June 23rd, another fourteen bombs were dropped in order to cut three roads and one road section, thus denying the enemy freedom to maneuver.

For troops on the ground, the first order of business was to establish two platoon-sized patrol bases. Until now, the coalition presence in the central corridor consisted of four Patrol Bases (PB). They were named Dog, Enduring Checkpoint 20, PB 2, and PB Red. The plan called for the establishment of two new bases named Whiskey 1 and Murray. Soldiers also maneuvered "picket lines" and created temporary traffic checkpoints on roads so that insurgent Lines of Communication were cut or disrupted.

Opening the new patrol bases was only part of the battle. Hardening them to protect forward deployed troops would require the 26th BSB to move a mountain of material. The enemy had demonstrated his ability and willingness to launch complex attacks on forward bases. One technique he'd already used was to crash into walls at forward bases with trucks loaded with explosives and then assault with dismounts supported by indirect fire.

Countering these attacks required sizable permanent fortifications meant to withstand a long fight. Carried forward by Army logisticians and engineers, giant, pale-gray concrete walls, prefabricated towers, concertina razor and barbed wire, ammunition, food, fuel, and water marched forward along dangerous highways in support of infantry. What could be moved by air was delivered by Chinook helicopters at night and lowered to the ground from slings on hovering aircraft.

Continuous bombing raids by US Air Force airplanes cut roads and destroyed illegal bridges. Aircraft dropped over 150 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) in support of the Spartan brigade. East of the Tigris, the Sledgehammer blocked the enemy and interdicted illegal traffic on river and road traffic. "Excalibur," a new precision guided artillery round, was used to destroy one of the enemy's House Borne IEDs.

With success, the communities showed willingness to cooperate with coalition forces and ISF. Iraqis could see that help had arrived and that the ISF and coalition were determined to stay. Tips began to trickle in. Commanders learned of an "insurgent navy" of sort. Boats laden with explosives were trolling the river to Baghdad. Helicopters and artillery hammered dozens of them with machinegun and rocket fire. Fiery wrecks sank to the bottom of the river, their pirate missions coming to an unanticipated end.

Marne Torch was an around the clock house to house fight. Soldiers dripped with sweat under the weight of protective armor. They established outer blocks around urban areas called "cordons." Then Soldiers inside the protected zone entered buildings through doors and windows. At night everything glowed green as infantry, wearing night vision goggles, searched buildings room by room. Over 570 structures were cleared and 349 insurgents were detained. The enemy did fight back. Every time he emerged he became a target and over 89 were killed. Patrol Base Whiskey 1 and PB Murray were both established on time. Marne Torch was a great success, part of a much larger campaign that had only just begun.

The challenges that were ahead were great. There was no functional government. Markets were in disrepair. Iraqis did not trust their own Iraqi Security Forces or the national government that they represented. They would demonstrate patience, but they wanted solutions for the problems that continued to plague. The enemy was on the run, but determined to return if the opportunity was presented.

Chapter 8

The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade Joins the Fight

Setting up for Success

The 3rd Combat Aviation Brigade arrived in Kuwait in May and organized itself for the key role that it would play in the counterinsurgency fight ahead. The Brigade consisted of 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment; 2nd Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment; 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment; and the 603rd Aviation Support Battalion. The 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division was attached to the CAB in place of one of the brigade's two attack helicopter battalions.

The division ordered its brigades to consolidate four unmanned aerial surveillance platoons into one company under the control of the 3rd CAB. This gave the CAB a unique capability to use drones as spotters in advance of manned aircraft attacks. The 1st Battalion attached a company of AH-64s to the

cavalry squadron. In kind, the cavalry squadron attached one company of OH-58Ds to 1st Battalion. The CAB established four Forward Air Refueling Points (FARP) at four separate FOBs. It positioned MEDEVAC aircraft where they could provide rapid evacuation for casualties.

Falcon's presence had an immediate impact. Pilots provided support to troops in contact, delivered critical supplies, and conducted air assault operations. The ability to attack the enemy from long distances with precision fires was a distinct advantage in the fight against insurgents in built up areas. With the Marne patch stretched across the sky, confidence soared to new heights.

Falcons in Marne Husky

On a moonless August night, the Combat Aviation Brigade became the main effort in Operation Marne Husky. Loaded with a company of light infantry from B Company, 3rd Battalion 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, two CH 47 Chinooks, and 3 UH 60 Black Hawks assaulted the village of Sayafiyah August 15th after a UAV located dozens of men sleeping atop a building in an insurgent stronghold. Soldiers emerged from aircraft and quickly seized their targets. A bomb sniffing German Shepherd named "Rocky" supported the men on the ground. Each captive was examined for explosive residue, catalogued as suspected insurgents, and taken for interrogation. A team of Apaches in support of the operation honed in on a nearby truck that exploded when it was engaged by 30 millimeter machine-gun fire. That made one less truck-bomb.

The operation was but one of a group in Operation Marne Husky. Operation Marne Husky was designed to keep enemy forces on the defensive in remote areas following Operation

Marne Torch. The CAB was given an area of operations much like the maneuver brigades on the ground, code named Tactical Area of Operations (TAO) "Plymouth."

Plymouth ran west along the Tigris River from the town of Suwayrah to the town of Salman Pak. At the time, there were insufficient Iraqi Security Forces to clear or hold the area and both the 2nd BCT and 3rd HBT were committed. To give the aviation led operation a ground element, B Company, from 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry was attached to the brigade. Infantry would be key to conducting sensitive site exploitation, the investigation that followed a successful attack, and in the effort to detain prisoners for interrogation. These forces were also critical in the detection of caches and IED laced structures. That enabled the CAB to destroy targets with planned strikes or close air support precision bombs without endangering Iraqis or coalition forces and their equipment.

During Marne Husky, the CAB used unmanned aerial systems teamed with manned aircraft, Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS), and joint strike packages. Pilots seated in a land based station miles away maneuvered drone aircraft silently above embattled neighborhoods around the clock, watching and waiting for the enemy. When the enemy was spotted, another aircraft manned by CAB warriors would vector onto targets long enough to deliver a death blow from thousands of feet away. This teaming kept roads clear of IEDs, countered mortar teams, and pushed snipers and insurgent leaders out of their hiding places where they could be captured or killed.

The CAB killed 63 of the enemy and captured 193 others. Of those captured, one was considered a high value individual (HVI), meaning that the man's absence would severely degrade the enemy. It found and destroyed five weapons caches and destroyed 24 boats. Intelligence reports indicated that some

insurgent leaders had fled the area. As a result of the operation, their terror networks were significantly disrupted.

The CAB was integral to every operation every day. Fuelers, ammunition handlers, maintainers, crew chiefs, and pilots all formed the cogs of an aviation machine that operated around the clock keeping the Marne air force aloft. Over 13,000 people were transported by air, which prevented them from being exposed to the threat of IEDs on the road. Air assaults allowed commanders to mass forces on target locations nearly instantaneously. The wounded, both Soldiers and civilians, were moved quickly from the point of injury to hospitals all the while receiving first class medical treatment resulting in saved lives and limbs. In addition, the CAB moved news media sent to tell the MND-C story, the division band to patrol bases, entertainers, and U.S. and Iraqi government officials.

The CAB moved other precious cargo as well. Over 1.6 million pounds of cargo including barrier material, huge metal shipping containers filled with supplies, ammunition, food and water, and even mail transited the battlefield thanks to the CAB. The Falcons had arrived and they played a pivotal role in every battle.

Chapter 9

The United States Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and CJSOTF

At any given time, the skies over the division's area of operation were crowded. It was a veritable super-highway of commercial jetliners arriving and departing Baghdad International Airport. Helicopters of all types and nations were workhorses operating around the clock. Hundreds of feet above ground silent sentinels, helium filled dirigibles with mounted video cameras, served as vigilant guards against ill-willed men.

Air Force, Navy, and Marine fighter bombers cut through the clouds near the speed of sound, day and night, finding and killing ground hugging enemies. The targets were often pre-planned, but in some cases planes were called on target by Task Force Marine Soldiers on the ground using Air Force Tactical Air Control Parties assigned to each battalion. Missiles and gun runs were used against "bongo trucks" hauling mortars or men with machineguns.

B1 bombers flew from distant stations, at times flying so far that in flight refueling was required. On command, planes rained steel on the earth below. They released precision guided munitions and kept collateral damage to a minimum. By the end of January 2008, the Air Force had dropped a stunning half million pounds of bombs in support of Multi-National Division - Center. Over 4,000 sorties were carried out.

The United States Navy contributed aircraft for attack missions as well as intelligence and electronic warfare support. On the ground, the 3rd Mobile Unit and later the 6th MU, Navy-led Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) battalions, placed joint forces bomb experts with dismounted infantry in order to counter IEDs and locate and destroy weapons caches. In ten months, it responded to over 3,000 incidents.

The Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps also provided police forces, military working dogs, and other specialties needed to fight insurgents, counter explosives, and search for people. Likewise, Task Force Marne received significant assistance from the quiet professionals of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF).

The CJSOTF launched operations, usually at night, to capture and kill key insurgent leaders across the battlefield. U.S. SOF also often teamed with Iraqi Special Operations forces to kill high value individuals and capture many more. Needless to say, the success of Task Force Marne was joint effort.

Chapter 10

Out West with the "Raider" Brigade Combat Team

The 1st Brigade Combat Team in Anbar Province was clearing portions of the provincial capitol, Ramadi. Though not attached to Task Force Marne, the "Raiders" continued the magnificent tradition of the 3rd Infantry Division alongside the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force.

In February of 2007, the Raiders helped facilitate recruiting drives for Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army forces. The turnout was remarkable with over 1,200 new recruits including both jundi (soldiers) and shurta (patrolmen) stepping forward for the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police, respectively.

At the end of "Murfreestown," an operation it had launched the same day it assumed AO Topeka, the Raiders established a new Joint Security Station (JSS) and police station. The JSS linked Iraqi Army, police, and coalition forces at one fixed site. For security forces that had rarely cooperated and barely trusted each other, it was a remarkable step forward. The arrangement

was efficient. It built confidence among Iraqi Security Forces and the public alike.

This became the signature strategy for all operations under emerging counterinsurgency doctrine, part of "holding" terrain in the whole clear/hold/retain scheme. Securing the population had priority over everything else. After the population perceived that it was safe, jobs and investments came. The economy improved and local governments could assume control.

Operation Murfreesboro was followed by Operation Okinawa and featured the concerted efforts of a Marine battalion and over 500 Iraqi police. Then, another Marine battalion was attached so that infantry, working with Task Force 3-69 Armor, could conduct Operation "Call to Freedom." During Call to Freedom, multiple caches were cleared and the brigade established a Civil Military Operations Center (CMOC) to provide humanitarian assistance to the city. March 31st, the day after Call to Freedom was completed, not a single attack or incident occurred in Ramadi, something unheard of just six weeks earlier.

All indicators showed that something good was happening in the Anbar province. The number of complex attacks, those involving deliberate planning and multiple enemy weapon systems, dropped dramatically. The ISF were finding nearly seven out of every ten caches discovered. Naturally, ISF knew the terrain and understood what right looked like and when something was askew. Nine out of ten IEDs were found before they were detonated thanks to tips from the public and alert, well trained Iraqi and American Soldiers. Al-Qaeda was disrupted, and, rather than attacking hardened coalition forces, it fled the city and continued its murder and intimidation campaign against innocent civilians living in rural areas.

The Raiders launched successive operations beginning in

April that continued through the summer. Operation "Lug Wrench" was conducted in order to disrupt insurgent activity in the Thar Thar dam area. It cleared insurgents in the southeast of Ramadi. Then, Operation "Kangaroo" cleared two more urban areas. Success bred confidence. As the brigade rolled through the summer of 2007, it became clear that the Raiders had achieved momentum that just might cross over boundaries and drastically change the whole dynamic of the conflict.

In late April, TF 3-69 AR assumed the BCT's main effort in Operation Forsythe Park. For over 72 hours, the Task Force fought through dense belts of IEDs against numerous enemy direct action cells with RPGs, mortar systems, and small arms of all types. It battled on through to the first weeks of May.

The Raider brigade continued to press the enemy and aggressively patrolled the remote desert areas. June 30th marked the beginning of the battle of Donkey Island. Task Force 1-77 Armor fought throughout the night against a determined enemy. By morning, 35 AQI fighters were killed, many of them wearing suicide belts, and another defeat of al-Qaeda by Coalition Forces was complete.

Clearing the enemy would not be enough. The brigade needed to hold what it had gained, ground and popular support. The Raiders set to work on the construction of fortifications. Thousands of yards of wire and dirt walls were built in and around the city. "T" walls and thick concrete barriers towered over vulnerable sites like government offices, industrial complexes, and security facilities in order to protect citizens and Soldiers from direct fire. Checkpoints were built on the approaches to the city. The results were astounding. August was the first month in recent memory with no IED attack of any kind.

Throughout September, clearance operations continued in advance of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting. The

previous year, terrorists had hijacked what should have been a time of peaceful celebration. They launched deadly attacks across Iraq. On September 13th, terrorists killed the leader of the political movement that united Sunnis against al-Qaeda. Instead of collapsing the "Anbar Awakening," the tribes remained united and determined to continue their partnership with the coalition forces. Ramadan continued in spite of the tragic death of the martyred sheik. Progress was so remarkable that the citizens of Ramadi celebrated with a parade to honor the ISF and Sheik Sattar.

In October and continuing through to November, the 1st BCT launched "Fahwat Al Asad 1 and 2" to clear the Muthana Chemical Facility and Thar Thar region of al-Qaeda fighters. The attack pursued terrorists east toward Baghdad thus destroying the enemy's capability to conduct finance operations as they had with illegal checkpoints, hijackings, and kidnappings. A permanent presence was established in the area. Dozens of terrorists were captured and a headquarters and torture chamber was uncovered along with two large caches. As the year came to an end, the Anbar province was hailed internationally as an example of success in Iraq.

Political momentum had begun. Government officials were active to relieve the public from dire humanitarian conditions. Services like electricity, water, sewage, and trash collection were addressed first with dialogue and then with money to make repairs. An agriculture bank was opened in order to help farmers cultivate their crops and livestock. A small business center opened in order to help contractors. A fire department, medical clinic, women's center, and city museum were opened. The criminal court tried its first case. A five kilometer "fun run" was held on what had been the most dangerous street in Iraq. Kids could be seen walking to school and frolicking in play-

grounds.

Hope was returning. Optimism could be seen in the faces of fuel truck drivers who traveled to and from the Al Anbar fuel distribution center. It could be seen in the eyes of newly freed detainees returning to their tribes on a promise of good behavior. Worshipers prayed at newly renovated mosques. Professionalism and morale soared among the *jundis* and *shurtas* that now controlled the streets of Ramadi.

The Raiders had fought for almost a full year. Ramadi and the Anbar Province had turned a corner. By January of 2008, the Iraqi government was planning to return the Anbar Province to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC). The question for the rest of Iraq was whether or not other provinces would follow suit.

Chapter 11

The Rise of the Sons of Iraq

The "Anbar Awakening" proved that Iraqis were not, as some claimed, wedded to extremism and aligned with the insurgency as a means to a desired end. Most wanted to live their own lives in peace with their families according to their traditions. In fact, there were clear indications that Iraqis desired reconciliation. Tribes, the bedrock of Iraqi culture, were mixed Sunni and Shia. In the past, there was intermarriage and neighbors had coexisted regardless of their sect. There was reason to believe that there could be an Iraqi solution to Iraqi problems.

The summer coalition offensive and the promise that ordinary citizens would not be abandoned inspired a break with extremists. So, in the fall of 2007, "grass roots" movements emerged in Mesopotamia. These movements united both Sunni and Shia to provide security for their neighborhoods. There were still too few Iraqi government forces and the model seen in Anbar

seemed feasible for the rest of Iraq. These groups were dubbed first "Concerned Local Citizens" and later "Sons of Iraq" (SoI). MND-C built a program for its companies, battalions, and the BCTs so that SoI were contracted to secure their communities.

Under contracts SoI would man checkpoints. They would report suspicious activities, turn over illegal weapons, and promise not to fire on coalition forces. They wore distinctive insignia, which for most was a reflective belt or vest. They agreed to remain in their own communities. In return, coalition forces would pay each member about \$300 per month. SoI were screened and enrolled into a biometric database. Many received some basic training.

The SoI helped to "thicken the force." This meant that as long as SoI guarded their communities, coalition forces were free to carry the fight to the enemy where he ran. SoI could not be used as an offensive force. This arrangement was a great advantage. Like the Iraqi Security Forces themselves, SoI spoke the language, knew the culture, and recognized "wrong" when they saw it. SoI had a vested interest in the future of their community and they were trusted by the traditional Iraqi leaders - the tribal sheiks and elders.

Clearly, many of the SoI had participated in the insurgency. But, having been an insurgent was not in and of itself a disqualification. The exception was that membership in the SoI was prohibited for persons who were known to have killed a coalition force member or innocent Iraqi. An SoI member did have to be 18 years or older. Reputation also counted. If a man was known for affiliations with terrorists, he would be detained and rejected. Times had changed and al-Qaeda and Shia militias had emerged as a common enemy to the people of Iraq and the coalition.

There were personal benefits for SoI. Membership carried

with it a certain degree of respect. SoIs were taking part in the renewal of Iraq. Each man suddenly had a regular job and he could begin to lead a normal life. SoIs were protecting their communities, their friends, and their families. Many hoped to take jobs with police forces if and when they were offered by the option by the government. Until then, the SoI were content to cooperate with the Iraqi Army, the coalition, and the Iraqi Police.

Cooperation with SoI led to the capture of HVIs, the clearance of weapons caches, and the early identification of IEDs. This allowed coalition forces more freedom of maneuver to conduct security operations. The SoI population grew over time to be nearly twice the size of MND-C's own U.S. forces, numbering nearly 36,000. The emergence of SoI, grew to be so important that their presence was considered a decisive effort in the fight against the insurgents.

Chapter 12

Marne Avalanche

Even as Marne Torch was underway, another operation was launched in a notorious area south of Baghdad in June of 2007. Jurf as-Sakhr lay in the Euphrates River Valley. The region was home to nearly 200,000 people.

Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) extremists were in a battle with another militant faction known as the Badr Corps. Both were vying for influence and threatened coalition forces with deadly Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFP) in and around Musayyib and Iskandariyah. Additionally, al-Qaeda still maintained a menacing presence in the region. AQI had launched attacks against coalition forces and it continued to foment sectarian violence by perpetuating attacks on the Shia. "Jurf" had been neglected under Saddam. The war and the continued sectarian strife made the area perpetually unstable.

Operation Marne Avalanche was launched in order to deny Jurf as-Sakhr to be used as an AQI sanctuary and to disrupt

EFP networks in Iskandariyah and Musayyib. The main effort for Marne Avalanche was the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division. The CAB played a major supporting role with air assault missions and 1,073 hours of attack helicopter direct support. The 2nd BCT supported the operation with indirect fires and both 3rd HBCT, located along the Tigris River, and the 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division performed blocking operations in support from the north and east.

Marne Avalanche was a three phase operation that began on July 1st and continued through August 15th. It had three phases. Phase 1 was used for setting conditions, conducting reconnaissance of the area, and developing targets. Phase 2 was the disruption phase aimed at both AQI and JAM extremists. Phase 3 was decisive operations and included close cooperation with Iraqi Security Forces.

Approximately 50 operations were conducted at the platoon, company, or battalion level. The combined effects of Marne Avalanche resulted in a significant reduction in the number of attacks in the Euphrates River Valley. Highlights of this operation included 17 enemy combatants killed in action, 156 detainees apprehended (with nine being high value individuals), over 60 IEDs and 26 weapons caches found, 13 boats used for weapons trafficking destroyed, 170 buildings cleared, and nearly 1,000 persons registered in the biometric database.

Simultaneously, the division conducted Operation Marne Husky in the Tigris River Valley with the 3rd CAB as the main effort. Both Marne Avalanche and Marne Husky had the effect of putting intense pressure on the enemy.

Marne Avalanche resulted in the establishment of the Jurf as-Sakhr Patrol Base and the identification of 13 new Sons of Iraq (SoI) groups with hundreds recruited to join. Additionally, the ISF gained experience and public confidence while conducting

combined operations with US forces. Marne Avalanche yielded tactical successes and allowed Task Force Marne to establish security posts in areas that had been without coalition presence. The experience and proximity to other areas in the "triangle of death" would pay dividends for the Iraqi people months later.

Chapter 13

Marne Torch II

September of 2007 was significant for many reasons. In the United States, 2007 marked the sixth year anniversary of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Also, the ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, and Gen. David Petraeus were scheduled to testify to Congress on progress of the war in Iraq.

Though it had been announced as a strategy in January, the "Surge" was really only in its fourth month of intensive combat operations. The al- Qaeda threat still lurked along the Tigris River Valley and that region still caused instability in Baghdad to the north.

Marne Torch had been launched in June and was focused on the Arab Jabour and Hawr Rajab areas. It had gained coalition forces more ground and had set in motion changes that would revitalize the area for its people. Attacks against coalition forces continued in the form of IEDs on the highways and

byways. Indirect fire, mortars, and rockets threatened bases. Iraqis generally were intimidated by al-Qaeda terrorist cells.

The danger posed by AQI was clear. On Sept 6th, less than a week before testimonies in Washington, AQI launched an attack on Sons of Iraq in Hawr Rajab. Over 400 displaced Sunnis were sheltered by Shias in Abu T'shir and others received care from Iraqi Army forces at a nearby checkpoint.

On September 15th, Task Force Marne launched Operation Marne Torch II. Its purpose was to disrupt extremists, al-Qaeda, and other affiliated movements to exploit the earlier successes of previous operations and deny the enemy sanctuary in central Arab Jabour, thus preventing the use of the area as a base for launching attacks into Baghdad.

Each major operation included detailed efforts to find the enemy using all the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance resources available. Sophisticated sensors were employed to listen to the enemy. Every lead and tip was evaluated in order to assess the enemy's posture in the region.

Following the "ISR" phase, the Spartan brigade once again became the division's main effort. It established a new patrol base named "Hawkes."

The Sledgehammer Brigade, 3/3 HBCT on the eastern side of the Tigris, also conducted disruption operations. In the seam between the two brigades, the 3rd CAB cut insurgent traffic across and along the river. As with every operation by this time, Iraqi Army forces were performing ever more significant roles and gaining the trust of the public and securing land.

In the end, 32 insurgents were killed and 222 were detained. Among those detained were two "HVIs." Thirty-four IEDs were found and 40 caches cleared. On the river, 12 more boats were destroyed, and on the ground, Soldiers physically cleared 779 structures.

It had been a long hot summer. Task Force Marne had in fact paid a price in battle, but by the end of Marne Torch II, indications were that there was a decline of violence in Baghdad. In the Multi-National Division - Center Iraqi leaders were meeting and outlining their goals for the future. Ordinary citizens were reaching out to each other across sectarian lines in numerous displays of compassion. In spite of the good, AQI still had enough venom to strike again.

Chapter 14

Hammer Time

In the summer of 2007, east of Baghdad, the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team (3HBCT) had conducted operations to build relationships with their new neighbors. The rough exterior of al-Wahida and Salman Pak hinted at a glorious past. A cancer had taken hold however. A combination of good will and deliberate combat operations were the surgery needed to remove the criminal elements from these once peaceful communities.

The 1-15 Infantry and 3-1 Cavalry conducted a series of operations to learn about the human "terrain" in their new operational area. The question was how to gain trust quickly so that Iraqi and coalition forces could take action on the most pressing social problems. A combination of extremist threat elements were at work in 3rd HBCT's area. There were Shia extremists with possible ties to Iran. There were al-Qaeda affiliated groups as well. AQI had been named Iraq's public enemy number one

and the Iraqi people had shown interest in allying against the common threat.

Prior to 3HBCT's arrival, there was little to stop the advance of criminals, insurgents, and illegal materials bound for Baghdad. Once on the ground, 3HBCT launched numerous operations, deliberate raids, search operations, and relationship building missions alongside two brigades of Iraqi National Police.

Hammer joined the fight under Operation Marne Torch, conducting missions with company teams to kill or capture extremists east of the Tigris River. Named operations such as "Casablanca, Anzio, Bull Run, Stampede, Destroyer Strike, and Palermo" disrupted insurgent cells, cleared caches, and won experience for partnered ISF units.

Through August and September, the brigade was a supporting effort to 3rd CAB during Operation Marne Husky and insurgents were running out of places to hide. Where they'd been able to control communities and highways with intimidation and IEDs, they now found newly emplaced National Police checkpoints, Sons of Iraq, and Hammer Soldiers in "hardened" outposts too strong to strike. Newly recruited police were training. The people were giving valuable intelligence and there was a sense of optimism. The brigade had trained capable, confident, and proud Iraqi police. 3HBCT was using 16 Sons of Iraq groups to reinforce its gains, hold hard earned terrain, and "thicken the force."

3HBCT had also formed bonds with the Iraqi people in the area through humanitarian outreach projects. Hammer Soldiers assisted small children with desperately needed medical care. They helped older victims of war overcome handicaps by providing wheelchairs. The very young were transported to hospitals where mobility was restored through surgery, prosthetics, and rehabilitation.

As fall came, the enemy was degraded by attrition. In successive coalition operations on the ground and from the sky, insurgents lost key leaders, men with special skills and training, finances, and safe houses. The number of attacks on coalition forces had dropped and there were corresponding gains in the capability of ISF.

October brought the return of 1-10 Field Artillery, fresh from its duties in the south at Bucca where it had supported the Theater (detainee) Internment Facility. 1-10 FA would be needed right away.

1-10 FA Strike the Anvil

Narhwan, a city of nearly 120 thousand mostly Shia, lay in the desert east of Baghdad. It was known as a transit point for trafficking weapons and other "accelerants" to Baghdad. Shia militias were in control and they were using the city to launch attacks. Essential infrastructure was in desperate need of repair and unemployment was rampant. The time had come to clear extremists from the city.

On October. 15th, a B1 bomber dropped four precision guided 2,000 lb bombs destroying the Diyala River bridge used by insurgents to smuggle munitions into Baghdad. This strike signaled the start of Operation Marne Anvil. The 3HBCT served as the division's main effort and 1-10 FA was in the lead. It conducted operations in order to deny Shia extremists a sanctuary from which to stage attacks into Baghdad. Marne Anvil demonstrated the CF's resolve to target extremists and criminals and simultaneously encourage the expansion of local security initiatives.

During Anvil, the 3rd CAB conducted daily reconnaissance operations and denied the enemy the use of terrain by using at-

tack aircraft combined with the division's field artillery assets. It continued to pair manned and unmanned aircraft for lethal effects – targeting insurgent group members, their weapons, and their caches. The CAB also supported Information Operations by dropping leaflets and provided support to wounded Soldiers by conducting on call assistance in the form of MEDEVAC.

The 1-10 FA, conducted seven named operations: "Montgomery," "Westmoreland," "Taylor," "Wheeler," "Abrams 1 and 2," and "Hal Moore." By November 15th, when Marne Anvil came to an end, the effects on the enemy included the capture of 65 detainees, seven IEDs found and cleared, four caches found, and 1,247 persons entered into the BATs database. Additionally, Sledgehammer established Combat Outpost Salie in the heart of Narhwan.

Baghdad was now safer and the local population felt more secure. Conditions were right for economic and social improvements that were long dreamed of, but always just out of reach until the arrival of the Sledgehammer Brigade.

Chapter 15

Battling Shia Extremists and Iranian Influence

It was clear from the beginning that one of the most dangerous threats in the Multi-National Division-Center's area was Shia extremists. Shias represented 90% of the population in the volatile south. Their forced poverty and repression under the former regime combined with ineffective governance had exacerbated social woes making the region ripe for religious extremism.

Jaysh al Mahdi, or "JAM" was a cultural, quasi-political movement led by Muqtada al Sadr. Sadr, a black clad young cleric, appealed to the impoverished and disenfranchised Shia youth who, at military age, were particularly susceptible to a call to arms against any shared, perceived enemy. Sadr was a staunch critic of the coalition and bore enough influence that he could quell masses of followers with just a few careful words or, for reasons of his own choosing, launch a full-scale war. His power base tended to radiate from the two great holy cities of

Karbala and Najaf, both of which were within MND-C's area of responsibility.

Iraq also had its share of cults. The "Soldiers of Heaven" was a well-equipped group of religious militants that believed that it could bring about the end of the world if it could kill the leading religious figures of Islam. The threat to stability in such a religious-centric nation as Iraq was obvious. In January of 2007, a group of nearly 300 Soldiers of Heaven fought to the death when members of the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, uncovered the group's plan to kill Iraq's leading Imam near the city of Najaf. The Soldiers of Heaven remained a threat, somehow resurrecting itself again and again.

The list of Shia political parties and competing factions was endless. At any time one or the other could engage in open warfare.

Border rival Iran, had a real appetite for anarchy and destruction. Coalition Forces found themselves on the leading edge of an international political and military conflict with dangerous long-term implications. In early May, soon after MND-C stood up, its Soldiers discovered a cache of Iranian made 107mm rockets in Mahmudiyah. These were the same type of weapons that had been used to kill U.S. Soldiers in attacks on Coalition bases. Components used for building IEDs were also found. Afterward, the discovery of caches throughout its sector became a daily occurrence for Task Force Marne. Some of these stores had been in place for months or years. They were extracted from walls, false floors, and underground compartments, often caked in rust but still dangerous. The ratlines for supplies to Shia extremists were thought to run from Iran to a number of Special Groups throughout Iraq.

On June 18th, MND-C assumed responsibility for Forward

Operating Base Delta, centrally located in the Wasit province buttressed by the porous Iranian border. MND-C was suddenly in physical opposition to the Persian perpetrators of instability inside Iraq. On August 10th, Task Force Marne launched Operation Marne Sentry. "Sentry" used a network of six coalition member, Georgian brigade, patrol bases and checkpoints to reinforce points of entry on the Iraq-Iran border. Daily, trucks loaded with commerce entered Iraq from abroad, joined by a steady flow of human traffic destined for cities throughout the nation. Iraqi border controllers learned procedures for managing cross-border commerce and over time many thousands of vehicles were searched and cleared.

On July 11th, 240mm rockets struck FOB Hammer killing one Soldier and wounding 15. The following day, a UAV patrolling the desert near the suspected point of origin detected 46 rocket launchers oriented on FOB Hammer. On the launchers were 35 Iranian rockets connected to launch timers – a devastating attack on the U.S. base had been prepared. EOD technicians were sent to investigate and neutralize the weapons. Forensic analysis suggested Iranian influence and a possible suspect in the attack. Evidence of Iranian involvement was beamed around the world by video to the American people. Iran could no longer claim that its hands were clean inside the border of Iraq. The rockets were destroyed but not before Iran had suffered a deserved attack on its international image, exposed as a destabilizing influence in Iraq.

A determined search for foreign agents continued throughout Iraq. Special Operations Forces teamed with MND-C to hunt facilitators and Special Groups members. The man responsible for the attacks on FOB Hammer was captured in his home by Sledgehammer Soldiers during a raid. He was found hiding under a bed with children as his shield. He was detained and

taken to face justice under Iraqi law.

Soldiers on the ground continued to uncover caches. Alpha Company, 2-69 AR was attached to 4/25 BCT on October 17th. It uncovered 100 copper discs, the material Iranian weapons makers used to build Explosively Formed Projectiles (EFP), the deadliest of IEDs. Nine days later a MiTT found more 107mm rockets. Every time a cache was found, a smuggler was disrupted, or an illegal entry was blocked, the Iranian influence was reduced.

The continued effort to block extremist influences in Iraq placed MND-C on the world's stage in an international drama. On one side was Iraq's oldest enemy – Iran and on the other, its newest ally – the United States.

A Sadr declared cease fire, announced in September, remained in effect. Sadr renewed his call for a cease fire in February of 2008. That same month, millions of Shia pilgrims trekked across Multi-National Division - Center's area of operations to the holy city of Karbala in celebration of Arba een. It was a magnificent display of confidence in the Iraqi security forces. Moreover, it was a demonstration of religious freedom not seen prior to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's tyrannical regime and the additional safety brought about by the surge.

Despite these achievements, the threat of Shia extremism and criminal influence continued. In March and April of 2008, the Government of Iraq launched operations across Iraq to eliminate Shia militia threats. Task Force Marne provided MEDEVAC support to Iraqis who were injured as a result of battles in the south. It used attack helicopters to strike militants armed with mortar tubes and launch racks for rockets. The division even provided a company team to support MND-B in battles against Shia extremists inside Sadr City. The CAB struck extremist rocket and mortar teams and IED planters throughout

the spring. As the summer of 2008 approached, Shia extremists had emerged as a leading threat to Iraq's stability and the problem was being confronted by ISF and coalition forces, including Task Force Marne, throughout Iraq.

Chapter 16

Marne Courageous

The 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) 'Rakkasans' arrived in Iraq in September of 2007 to replace the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division in Task Force Marne. They were responsible for a Sunni dominated area south of Baghdad known for agriculture and livestock. The brigade's boundaries stretched from north to south on a highway called route "Tampa" by U.S. forces. It included the cities of Mahmudiyah, Yusufiyah, and Latifiyah, nicknamed the "Triangle of Death." The "Rakkasans" readied for one of the biggest air assault missions yet conducted by Task Force Marne.

Operation "Marne Courageous" launched hundreds of Soldiers across the Euphrates River west into an area that previously had had no coalition forces. The Rakkasans entered the village of Owesat in the early morning hours of November 16th. Intelligence indicated that the area was an important stag-

ing area for extremists. The targeted area was close to the site of the May 12, 2007 attack on Coalition forces. Two kidnapped Soldiers from the 2/10 BCT were still unaccounted for and were officially listed as Missing-Captured. A search of the area, it was thought, might yield clues to the whereabouts of the two men.

Owesat was also suspected of harboring al-Qaeda and other Sunni extremists. Extremists had been pushed from other areas following Operations Marne Torch, Avalanche, and Husky. In Owesat and the surrounding villages of the Euphrates River Valley, AQI had assimilated into the population. They were recruiting new members, and conducting operations against coalition forces, ISF, and Sons of Iraq. Owesat was a known transit point for smuggled weapons, ammunition, explosives, and other materials that threatened Baghdad. If coalition forces established a presence in the area, AQI would be cut off from one more route to the capital.

The Rakkasans' mission was to clear AQI of sanctuary areas and establish a permanent presence to defeat sectarian violence, secure the population, and prevent attacks against Coalition Forces. In order to accomplish the mission, the Rakkasans would have to first secure the populations of Owesat and al-Betra. A permanent Coalition Force an ISF presence and a Sons of Iraq group were required west of the Euphrates River.

For the first time, Task Force Marne employed an assault float bridge which facilitated the crossing of the Euphrates River. Patrol Base Kemple was established on December 14th across the river from Patrol Base Dragon, linking Owesat to the eastern shore of the Euphrates and allowing coalition forces to secure the village.

In addition to the establishment of the patrol base, intelligence was collected on the two missing Soldiers. IEDs were

also cleared, along with over 200 buildings, and more than 800 persons were entered into the biometric database. In December, Gen. David Petraeus announced to reporters that Owesat had been secured. The Rakkasans had again proven their mettle and established their BCT as a force to be reckoned with.

Chapter 17

Marne Roundup

The 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 3rd Infantry Division, “Vanguard,” arrived in Iraq in November following training at Fort Stewart, the National Training Center, and Kuwait. It replaced the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division. The Vanguard Brigade was task organized with its own 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, and the 43rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion. The 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, was also attached to 4th BCT. Vanguard's 4th Battalion, 64th Armor was attached to MND-B in Radwaniyah.

The continued threat south of Baghdad and west of Iskandariyah was al-Qaeda. AQI networks had used the area to stage attacks on coalition forces and ISF. The area was known for its fish farms. AQI also used the region as a safe haven from which it could strike the Shia population in and around Iskan-

dariyah. The area was a ratline for the trafficking of accelerants to Baghdad from Syria through Fallujah, to Jurf as-Sukhr, Abu Muhalhal, Hanaswa, and al-Khudir. Physical evidence from the search for the two missing 10th Mountain Division Soldiers tied some members of the prominent tribes in the target area to al-Qaeda.

On December 1st, the day Vanguard accepted responsibility of their area, it conducted Marne Roundup. Roundup was intended to set conditions for improved security in the Khidr and Jurf as-Sukhr region in order to secure the population and prevent the area's use as a staging area for attacks into Baghdad. Phase one of the operation was the use of intelligence assets to set the conditions for the logistics necessary for Phase two. Vanguard would secure the local population by constructing a patrol base in vicinity of Khidr. A new patrol base there would prevent the re-emergence of AQI in the area. Money would be used as ammunition to encourage economic development. Sons of Iraq Groups would be formed to further neutralize the threat of AQI.

When Marne Roundup came to an end in January of 2008, the Vanguard brigade had cleared more than 40 caches and detained over 70 insurgents, two of whom were deemed high value targets. Additionally, Vanguard established Patrol Base Kelsey. Vanguard continued to develop its operations area.

Chapter 18

Marne Fortitude II

There was no denying that the summer and fall campaigns saved Mesopotamia from becoming a complete disaster. The new reality of improved security was the genesis to a new plan designed solely for improving the capability and capacity of the Iraqi government and its security forces. On January 1st MND-C launched a new campaign plan called Marne Fortitude II. The mission statement was still based on the original task, to continue to interdict accelerants headed into Baghdad, defeat sectarian violence, and secure the population. The new aspect of the mission was the objective to increase the capacity of Iraqi security forces, provincial governments, and economic systems in order to create the conditions for long term Iraqi self-reliance. In order, the division would transition security operations to Iraqi Security Forces. The campaign focused on six Lines Of Operation (LOO) or focus areas. The LOOs were: security, transition, governance, economics, the rule of law, and

communication.

Security

On the same day the Division launched Marne Fortitude II, operation Marne Thunderbolt also began. The Spartan Brigade was once again the division's main effort in an attack on al-Qaeda and other Sunni extremists in southern Arab Jabour. The earth shook as Air Force bombers unleashed tons of high explosives on known caches and suspected IEDs on January 10th. The 5th Squadron, 7th Cavalry, nearing the end of its own deployment with 1st BCT in Ramadi, rejoined the division as it attacked east toward the Tigris River. The 2nd BCT killed three dozen enemy fighters and detained more than 50 others. It cleared more than a 100 IEDs and 23 caches. The Spartans helped establish 70 Sons of Iraq checkpoints and established Patrol Base Kelsey.

On the east bank of the Tigris, the Sledgehammer Brigade teamed with the 13th Battalion of the 1st Georgian Brigade. On February 15th they began Operation Marne Grand Slam to clear Salman Pak of extremists. A clear message was sent. Extremists were denied a sanctuary. The Sledgehammer Brigade pushed south along the east banks of the Tigris. The Spartan brigade simultaneously cut escape routes for insurgents on the west side of the river. Grand Slam resulted in eleven enemy detained, seven IEDs found, forty caches cleared, 195 buildings searched, and \$1.5 million allotted for emergency repairs. Sledgehammer established Combat Outpost Carver and continued the effort to strengthen communities through presence and the development of Sons of Iraq groups. Finally, a new bridge was installed linking communities on the east bank of the Tigris to communities on its west bank.

By every metric used to measure attacks – small arms, in-

direct fire, and improvised explosive devices – the enemy had been affected by the coalition. Vigilance was paramount among Soldiers in their outposts and on patrol. Baghdad was benefiting from relative peace. Its government passed a series of legislative measures designed to unify the nation. Reconciliation was underway.

Iraqi Security Forces serving alongside U.S. forces took leading roles in major operations. They often conducted independent operations at lower levels.

Transition in Action

In 2003, the 3rd Infantry Division participated in the near-complete destruction of Iraq's armed forces. Coalition forces spent four years working to rebuild the nation's security forces. This was not an easy task. The Iraqi Army, its National Police, as well as local police forces were in need of manpower, equipment, and training. Coalition forces had to fight the insurgency and build the new national defense organization simultaneously. Eventually, coalition forces would have to turn responsibility for security over to Iraqis. Viable security required forces sufficient to defend Iraq from all internal and external threats.

Transition Teams (TT) were formed by the Multi-National-Corps and MND-C. These brave Soldiers were assigned to advise Iraqi army and police units. They often lived and fought alongside ISF at remote sites too distant for immediate U.S. military support. These transition teams were appropriately named for the tasks they were assigned. There were police (PTT), national police (NPTT), military (MiTT), border (BTT), and Point of Entry Transition Teams (POETT). Each received training at a special "Phoenix Academy" in advance of their alignment with Iraqi forces. Then, they moved to Iraqi gar-

risons and stations, Joint Security Stations (JSS), and patrol bases. Confidence, competence, and capabilities grew over time from continuous operations and training. Understandably, shared sweat and danger inspired mutual respect and admiration among soldiers from both armies.

The 8th Iraqi Army in the south, the 4th Brigade of the 6th Iraqi Army nearer Baghdad, and the 1st National Police Brigade east of the capitol improved their capability every day. The Iraqi people responded positively to their soldiers and the return of authority to their military forces. Doubt and skepticism was replaced with confidence and pride. Tribal elders met and settled disputes peacefully and then allied security forces against extremists. Young men formed long lines to volunteer their service. Citizens provided tips and intelligence. Since Iraqi security forces were taking more of a role, it was possible to release some former combatants into the general population. Freed detainees returned to their communities under the watchful eyes of tribal “guarantors” who ensured that they would not return to their criminal ways.

In February and March, millions of pilgrims streamed to the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in peaceful celebration of Islamic holidays. Attack rates on Iraqis and coalition forces dropped from a high of 25 per month in May to under five per month. By March of 2008, the rate of effective attacks against coalition forces was near zero.

Iraqi soldiers and police formed long lines at coalition-run military schools. Aligned with brigade combat teams, scores of Iraqi soldiers competed for the opportunity to train under their counterparts – American officers, NCOs, and Soldiers. Culturally, few armies in the world place as much value on the role of NCOs as the services of the U.S. military. The Task Force Marne NCO Academy opened in February to imbue each Iraqi

Security Force member with the professionalism and competence that makes the NCO Corps the backbone of the U.S. Army. Instructors gave professional development and leadership training during a two week training program. The return of a professional, well-equipped, and confident Iraqi Security Force presented a nightmare scenario for extremists and terrorists.

Governance and Economics

More of everything was needed for the Iraqi population. Security alone would not heal the sick, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, or advance the education of Iraq's next generation. For a time, the insurgency had flourished because it could afford to pay naive young men to risk their lives and attack government and coalition forces. Now, four years after the invasion, Iraq's new government was stronger. The population felt safer. Reconciliation measures were adopted and laws were passed that benefited the Iraqi people as a whole.

The U.S. State Department pitched in and small teams of civilian experts called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were deployed to help Brigade Commanders and provincial governments address the needs of their citizens. Commanders often met with their counterparts from "city councils" or provincial-level leaders and worked through difficult issues. Helicopters shuttled national-level ministerial leaders to their constituents in MND-C's area of operations. These "helicopter ambassador" missions connected the local government to the national governmental leaders. At the same time, sheiks of local tribes gathered to share ideas, reconcile and chart a way forward for their communities. Improved security and government resurgence inspired confidence from foreign investors and

Iraqi businessmen.

Coalition commanders, resourced with Commander's Emergency Relief Program (CERP) funds, learned to use money as ammunition. Each provided money to subordinate commanders to fund repairs to infrastructure. The process benefited communities that had achieved respectable levels of security. First there would be an assessment, then bidding would begin by Iraqi entrepreneurs. A contract would be awarded and labor and material would then go to work.

Government centers were built and existing facilities, such as jails, were repaired. A new police headquarters was built for the 3rd Iraqi National Police Brigade in the Mada'in qada. A vocational technical college opened in Iskandariyah. Schools for children were brought back from ruin. Pumping stations, powered and repaired, began pushing water through canals. Farmers unions stood up. A massive brick factory in Narhwan was revived. Poultry and fish industries were revitalized. Streets were cleaned and over grown lots were cut down. Safer communities, more beautiful than anyone remembered, reemerged. Radio stations opened and a newspaper company was started. An industrial complex in Iskandariyah began assembling buses and metal trailers.

The pace of economic and governance progress accelerated thanks to improved security. Above all, there was new hope that Iraq would emerge a strong nation, controlled not by men with guns, but by the rule of law.

Rule of Law

Combat operations cleared the ground of criminals and insurgents to permit justice to take hold. Successive operations detained, disrupted, or outright killed the agents of chaos, death,

and destruction. Power lines energized street lights in more and more communities. Cell phones were allowing law abiding citizens to call tip lines and report violators. Still though, there was a general lack of confidence.

The security forces did not have confidence that the courts would or could prosecute offenders. Judges did not feel safe. The courts themselves were in shambles. In Salman Pak judges had been attacked and intimidated to the point that they had relocated completely. Their court houses, like the judicial system they represented, were in ruins. For simple legal matters, residents were forced to travel great distances over dangerous routes. Nothing was easy, safe, or efficient.

Success with regard to the rule of law, as defined by the Marne Fortitude II campaign plan, had three components. First, MND-C went to work to make the courts secure, effective, and efficient. Second, MND-C would help the Iraqi people gain confidence and trust in the judicial system and those who administered its institutions. Finally, the ISF and the judicial system would have to function together under the Rule of Law.

A program to equip and train Iraqi judges was developed within MND-C. Judges received new computers loaded with a database containing all existing Iraqi laws dating back to World War I. Cutting-edge automation tools made legal research much easier and efficient. The courthouse in Salman Pak was reopened and judges returned to the communities they were paid to serve. The Iraqi Army and the Mahmudiyah Court developed a bond that had not previously existed. In numerous other cities, new furniture was installed in court houses and jails were renovated and expanded to hold more prisoners in more humane conditions. At every opportunity, the public was brought in to witness ceremonies to showcase progress. Media reported stories of improvement in the establishment of the rule of law throughout Iraq.

Communication

It was the information age and the most important battle-ground left in Iraq was the media – television, newspaper, internet, and radio airwaves. The enemy had earned a reputation for being effective at "information operations." He used disinformation and propaganda with great effect. He took advantage of misinformation and spread rumors to extend fear and dissent. He shaped his message with violence and deceived the public on the intention of government and U.S. forces. His attacks were timed for maximum effect on western audiences.

To combat the insurgents IO campaign, the division focused on three audiences – the U.S./western public, the Iraqi people, and the insurgents. At the division level, the task of carrying the story of success in Iraq to the U.S./western media fell to the division public affairs office. Throughout the Marne Fortitude II campaign, the division operationalized public affairs. It conducted interviews with Soldiers' home town media to bring the story directly to small-town America. It rapidly released daily video and print stories to internet based and traditional media via satellite. Soldiers and their Families were kept informed through email circulated newsletters like the "Dog Face Daily," the "Marne Focus" bi-weekly newspaper, and the "From the Front" quarterly magazine. Leaders escorted embedded media across the length and breadth of MND-C's area of operations. The division's reputation for telling its story was widely known and respected for outpacing the enemy's own efforts in the information war.

The division developed an Iraqi Media Section (IMS) in its G-7 section to specialize in outreach to the Iraqi media and public. Written media products were sent to Iraqi media to be printed in newspapers across the country. Every major event,

opening, and dedication had invited Iraqi media to showcase progress to the public. Special press conferences featuring senior division leaders were given to grateful reporters at the Coalition Press Information Center in Baghdad. Iraqi media were welcomed on battlefield circulation events. Media enjoyed security and unfettered access.

Psychological Operations teams were attached to BCTs. PSYOP Soldiers helped carry the division's message through media product development. Leaflets were distributed by hand or released by high-flying Black Hawks from the 3rd CAB. Posters and billboards encouraged support for the government and extolled the importance of helping Iraqi society. Loud-speakers broadcast messages encouraging cooperation with the new leaders of a democratic Iraq.

Simply stated, it was hard to watch a TV, listen to a radio, or read a paper without seeing or hearing a message from Task Force Marne. Task Force Marne had denied the enemy any claim of success in his information fight.

The Future and Fortitude

Marne Fortitude II continued beyond the transfer of authority from the 3rd Infantry Division to the 10th Mountain Division. Fortitude II was an innovative strategy for MND-C. It led to two major operations, Piledriver and Dauntless.

Chapter 19

Rock of the Marne Serves Alongside First Team / Iron Horse

Task organization changes were made to 3rd, 2nd, and 4th BCT in order to improve security inside Baghdad. The 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor, normally assigned to the 3rd HBCT, was attached to Multi-National Division - Baghdad. The 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry (Garryowen) and 1-64 Armor (Desert Rogues), both assigned to the 2nd BCT, were placed under the operational control of Multi-National Division - Baghdad in the summer of 2007 shortly after arriving in theater. Most of the 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, also part of 2nd BCT, was sent further north to provide vital security for the massive logistics terminal known as LSA Anaconda. A contingent remained with TF Marne and supported the division in the role of infantry and provider of indirect fire. Finally, the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor, normally assigned to the 4th BCT, was also attached to Multi-National Division - Baghdad. Their contributions continue the story of the Marne division and its

service in OIF from 2007 to 2008.

Panthers

The 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor (Panthers) answered the call to duty when it deployed with the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division as part of the "Surge." Two of its companies (Able and Bayonet) remained under the command of the 3rd Infantry Division and MND-C brigades at Kalsu and Yusufiyah. Both were distinguished for their contributions to the campaigns of 2007 and 2008.

The battalion headquarters and the four remaining companies fought as part of MND-Baghdad on the strategically important Karada peninsula. Task Force Panther, conducted the full spectrum of operations, providing security, facilitating improved government capacity, and stimulating economic growth. It netted over 170 enemy detainees while clearing over forty caches.

The 2nd Battalion's companies developed or improved markets, schools, clinics, sewage, and other public works. They amassed impressive accomplishments. Each controlled large and heavily populated zones in the city. "Cobra" Company initially operated from COP Lima Bravo in Haay Babil. Its area of responsibility continued to grow. Then, in February, it moved to Muthana-Zayuna where it continued to secure the population against extremists. "Dealer" company initially assumed responsibility of Wedha Riyadh. Later, after successive and successful operations, it moved to Al Jadyda where it helped re-establish neighborhood councils, an effective Sons of Iraq program, the first opportunity for women's employment - a sewing shop, and the New Baghdad Al Jadyda Market.

E/2-69 AR "Outlaws" had the difficult task of keeping the highways and byways safe for coalition and civilian traffic.

The Outlaws started an extensive sanitation project in order to reduce the threat of hidden IEDs and restore the esteem of communities. It conducted over 300 route clearance missions as the main route clearance team on seven major roads in the capitol. It conducted dangerous escort missions for logistics convoys to support the coalition.

The battalion's headquarters company "Hellcats," included a sniper section, mortar platoon, scout platoon, medical platoon, and headquarters platoon. The Hellcats conducted numerous sniper and scout operations and captured sixteen high value targets. Its medical platoon delivered over \$300 thousand worth of medical supplies to Iraqi medical clinics.

Task Force Panther rejoined the Sledgehammer Brigade in May just before redeploying to Fort Benning.

Garryowen

Garryowen assumed responsibility for "Zone 20," an area of MND-Baghdad, on 15 June 2007. Al-Qaeda and Shia extremist Special Groups both operated in the Zone. The impoverished Shia enclave known as Sadr City had a menacing impact on the entire area. So, troops began conducting 24 hour operations to disrupt enemy activity, maintaining constant vigilance.

Three weeks after TOA, 3-7 CAV received orders to take control of Adhamiyah, a dangerous community known for Sunni extremist activity. The troops went right to work but their new neighbors were hardly receptive to their guests. When 3-7 CAV first took to the streets, residents were afraid to make eye contact. Attacks were immediate.

The Squadron conducted over 20 patrols a day. The enemy conducted coordinated and deliberate attacks using deep buried IEDs, small arms, and grenades. The Squadron conducted con-

tinuous large scale, operations targeting AQI strongholds.

With coalition security taking hold, a turning point occurred August 6th. That day, the Abu Hanifa Mosque, a known safe haven and weapons cache site for al-Qaeda and other Sunni extremist groups, was surrounded by local citizens. They had tired of the terrorists in their midst. Iraqi Army forces and 3-7 CAV established a joint cordon around the mosque. An IA battalion then cleared the mosque of terrorists and a huge weapons cache. This operation symbolized the beginning of the end for AQI in Adhamiyah.

By the middle of August, training had begun for the Sons of Iraq (SoI). In November, the SoI moved from the stationary sites, where they protected infrastructure and operated checkpoints. This significantly reduced the effectiveness of al-Qaeda so much that they were no longer able to conduct any coordinated attacks on civilians or coalition forces.

In January, 3-7 CAV joined 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division. Although the squadron was spread throughout eastern Baghdad, Garryowen's partnerships with ISF and SoI allowed 3-7 CAV to keep pressure on Sunni extremists as well as the Shia extremist "Special Groups." The squadron began several initiatives designed to restore essential services, increase economic viability of the area, and improve urban appearance.

From the relationships developed with the people of Adhamiyah to the implementation of the Sons of Iraq, the efforts of 3-7 Cavalry created the conditions for an endurable peace. Needless to say, the people of Adhamiyah learned that it was safe to look eye to eye with their friends from Garryowen.

Rogues

On June 15th, Task Force 1-64 assumed control of its area of

responsibility in the Mansour district of Baghdad, another area under MND-Baghdad. The battalion immediately started combat patrols and occupied three Joint Security Sites and Combat Outposts in the city.

The battalion focused its combat operations in June and July on defeating al-Qaeda in Khadra, Adl, and Jamia along with Shia extremists in east Mansour. By partnering with Iraqi Army and Police, the Rogues made tremendous gains, marginalizing al-Qaeda and Shia extremists. The battalion reduced IED attacks on U.S. forces from an average of one or more a day to less than one a month in Khadra and Jamia. In August, the battalion established COP Washash. Shortly after occupation, Delta Company began executing a series of raids to capture Shia extremists.

Throughout the fall, the Task Force focused on building safe neighborhoods. Through mentorship and coaching, local representative civic councils nominated communities. Once identified, construction began to position tall, concrete “T” walls, creating a sort of “gated community.” With the introduction of the safe neighborhoods concept and barriers, violence dropped significantly.

When it came to economics, the Task Force received over 1000 micro-grant applications to spur capital improvements. By March, over 200 micro-grants had been funded at just over \$500 thousand and the area had seen a 300% increase in business openings across the Task Force Area of Operations. The Task Force ultimately sponsored more than \$2.2 million dollars in infrastructure improvements for essential services.

Simultaneously, the Rogues capitalized on improving the security environment and began efforts to recruit and train citizens to help secure their neighborhoods. Violence in the western district of Baghdad saw a drop of over 70%. The battalion

emplaced 40 thousand tons of concrete barriers to establish traffic check points, observation posts, and safe neighborhoods throughout the Mansour district.

Battleking

On May 11th 2007, 1st Battalion, 9th Field Artillery, deployed to Iraq as a Paladin howitzer fires battalion in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. During reception and staging in Kuwait, the battalion reorganized for a mission detached from 2d Brigade Combat Team attached to 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division at Logistics Support Area Anaconda (LSAA). Battery B was detached so that it remained with 2nd BCT, 3ID as a fires battery and a motorized, rifle-company at FOB Mahmudiyah south of Baghdad, Iraq.

In Iraq, Task Force 1-9 FA received an attachment of Battery A, 5-5 Air Defense Artillery from Fort Lewis, and the 514th Maintenance Company from Fort Hood, later replaced by the 557 Maintenance Company from Fort Irwin. In June, the Task Force assumed responsibility for the defense of LSA Anaconda, the largest Coalition installation in Iraq and the second busiest airport in the world. The battalion operated three entry control points, the Joint Defense Operations Center, the Joint Intelligence Center, and Quick Reaction Force platoons.

Task Force Battleking worked closely with and supported the maneuver and fires task forces responsible for the area surrounding LSAA including 2d Battalion, 82d Field Artillery from Fort Hood and 2d Battalion, 320th Field Artillery from Fort Campbell. Battery A organized into six maneuver platoons that provided additional combat power to security operations for LSAA. The Headquarters Battery was responsible for LSAA perimeter security and the Joint Defense Operations Center.

Forward Support Company G and 577 Maintenance Company defended the north, east, and south entry control points.

At FOB Mahmudiyah, Battery B established Paladin howitzer platoons on three FOBs in support of five maneuver brigades, while at the same time providing command and control of Joint Patrol Base Whiskey-1 with an Iraqi Army company. Soldiers were spread across southern Iraq from locations south of Baghdad to FOB Delta, located in the east at Al Kut. Bravo controlled ten M109A6 Paladin Howitzers, one Q-36, and one Q-37 Radar, as well as over twenty M1151 gun trucks. In addition to this, Bravo took on the responsibility of training and accounting for a group of over 200 Sons of Iraq, consisting of Maderiyah and Al Thuar citizens who volunteered to contribute to the improvement of their security situation.

In the end, Bravo Battery fired over ten thousand lethal and non-lethal rounds, achieving effects with High Explosives, Rocket Assisted Projectiles, Illumination, and the Army's new precision guided 155mm Excalibur round.

Tuskers

The 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment was responsible for an area in southwest Rashid, Baghdad known as Radwaniyah. Radwaniyah had what was called "a sectarian fault line." Sunni and Shia had lived side by side but violence had been so severe that a security wall was erected between the two in order to prevent continued bloodshed. Hundreds of families had been displaced. The need for reconciliation was paramount. The Tuskers first had to establish security.

By April of 2008, Tusker had conducted more than 35 named operations including targeted raids, clearing and reconnaissance operations. In late December, Tusker conducted Operation

Saydiyah Dawn. Saydiyah Dawn was a combined operation that resulted in several criminals killed or captured and a significant amount of munitions recovered from enemy caches.

TF 4-64 took an active role in the welfare of the citizens of Baghdad. It administered care to children when no other care was available. Throughout the winter the battalion partnered with National Police and conducted joint school assessments and provided supplies to students and faculty. Iraq had turned bitter cold and there were shortages of electricity and fuel. The battalion helped escort trucks from the Doura oil refinery to distribution points where Iraqi citizens were issued kerosene. This was the first time in over a year that kerosene was issued to the citizens of Saydiyah on this large of a scale.

In March of 2008, a bank opened in Saydiyah. The Rafidain Bank was the first state bank to open since the war began. This was a joyous occasion for the citizens of Saydiyah and the Iraqi Security Forces. Both the Sons and Daughters of Iraq assisted in providing security in coordination with the Iraqi Army and Iraqi National Police. Tellers and clerks went to work processing transactions for customers - withdrawals, deposits, and loans for home repairs and new business ventures.

That same month, the Saydiyah Support Council held a reconciliation party. Several hundred citizens attended the event along with high ranking officials from the GOI, Iraqi Islamic Party, and local religious leaders.

The Tuskers were doing their part to help heal the wounds that divided the people of Radwaniyah.

Chapter 20

Return of the Raiders

On March 20th, 2008, the Raider Brigade cased its colors at Ramadi. The “Topeka” area that it had been responsible for during the previous 15 months transferred to the Marine Corps' Regimental Combat Team 1. Anbar Province had experienced an awakening that would not have been imagined before the brigade arrived in January of 2007.

Ramadi, once claimed as the capitol for an Islamic caliphate by al-Qaeda in Iraq, was free, peaceful, and on a path to full reconciliation. There was even talk that the province would revert to full Iraqi control in the near future. The Brigade returned to Fort Stewart for a well-deserved hero's welcome. Its mission complete, the Raider brigade began its march to 2009 with new leaders at the helm, ready to open another chapter in Marine history.

Chapter 21

End Game

Marne Rugged

By springtime, successive operations in the Tigris River Valley (TRV) had made a difference in the levels of violence, most notably in Baghdad. Attacks were down to levels of those three years earlier. The attacks on the "Golden Mosques" had nearly unraveled the efforts to build a democratic government in Iraq, but there was now hope.

Al-Qaeda was on the run. In isolated pockets, removed from the territory it once dominated, members sat and brooded over failures. They waited and planned future attacks. They needed to find a way to reestablish lines of communication to Baghdad. AQI had been pushed south from Arab Jabour and Salman Pak. In those communities, citizen watch groups were now posted to protect neighborhoods. Government centers were opening. Operation Marne Fortitude II was helping restore services and

capacity. Gains needed to be protected and momentum needed to be sustained.

Task Force Marne decided to press the attack further south. It launched Operation Marne Rugged on the west banks of the Tigris River in Abbas al Amir in the Obeidi region. Dense vegetation in the Samrah and Suwayrah Jungles offered the suspected 20 to 40 AQI fighters there an area to disperse, hide, and operate. Extremists watched and waited for an opportunity to resume operations against the people and the government northward through Salman Pak, Jisr Diyala, Arab Jabour, and Baghdad. For now, they hid caches and intimidated the local population.

Shaping operations began on March 1st followed by offensive operations on March 15th. The 4th BCT was once again the main effort. To the Vanguard fell the responsibility for clearing and disrupting the enemy. In the preparatory phase of the operation, human, signal, and image intelligence was collected. The material necessary for building a new patrol base was amassed. The 2nd BCT, 3rd HBCT, and the 3rd CAB were positioned to support 4th BCT.

The Vanguard Brigade, along with Task Force Liberty - the 479th Engineers, carved Patrol Base Summers from an abandoned airfield in a remote area 20 miles south of Baghdad. On March 16th, parachutes carrying building materials descended from Air Force cargo planes to builders on the ground. The 703rd Brigade Support Battalion hauled supplies over dangerous roads while infantrymen from 2-502 IN, artillerymen from 1-76 FA, and tankers from 2-69 AR provided security.

Following clearing operations, Vanguard engaged locals as part of the continuing effort to build "Sons of Iraq" programs. It found and destroyed weapons caches and identified opportunities for economic improvements.

Looking back, Marne Rugged set conditions for long term security in the Abbas al Amir. ISF had operated alongside U.S. forces throughout and there were options for sustained economic and social development continuing through legitimate local government, GoI initiatives, and civic action.

Piledriver to Dauntless

A remarkable thing happened on March 24th, 2008. From a studio in Baghdad, the commander of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division unveiled the next in a series of Task Force Marne Operations to media at the Pentagon. Seated to his right was the leader of the Provincial Reconstruction Team embedded with the Rakkasans. To his left was the Iraqi Army Brigade commander that shared battle space with the Brigade and was the main effort in the coming operation "Piledriver."

Piledriver was the first operation that was designed, planned, and executed under the Marne Fortitude II campaign plan. It was to transition from a pure focus on security to focus on stability, infrastructure improvement, and economic development. While other operations had relied on set timelines, Piledriver was open-ended. Where other operations directed the use of force against enemy formations, Piledriver allocated money to civil affairs projects.

Piledriver was launched in April of 2008. Its end date was not set in stone. It represented the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Iraq, authored as part of a campaign called Marne Fortitude II.

A new patrol base was established along the Euphrates River. Radio stations were established for areas that heretofore had had no media of its own. Over 40,000 fertilized chicken eggs were delivered from Europe in order to rekindle Iraq's poultry

industry. Numerous other agriculture initiatives were launched in order to improve the economy and continue improvements in capacity.

Other operations were planned. In May, the division launched operation Marne Dauntless. Marne Dauntless, like Piledriver was designed to increase capacity. Unlike Piledriver, Dauntless focused on the Mada'in Qada. Like the MND-C brigades before it, the BCT that replaced 3rd HBCT, the 2nd BCT, 1st Armor Division, hit the ground running, immediately conducting security operations and capacity building operations that would benefit all citizens.

Chapter 22

Transferring Authority

On June 1st, 2008 the 3rd Infantry Division transferred authority for Multi-National Division Center to the 10th Mountain Division. The 3rd Infantry Division had built the Multi-National Division - Center from the ground up. It led a fight to cut the flow of accelerants into Baghdad, reduce violence, and thereby provide the crucial time needed for the new government to succeed. Violence was lowered in the capitol city, and with peace, came political progress. Laws were passed that supported reconciliation. New elections were planned for the fall of 2008 that would foster continued maturity of democracy in Iraq. The difference in the stability and economic viability of the MND-C's operational environment a year after the 3rd ID's arrival was truly remarkable. The perception on the ground had changed, and with this change came understanding that the insurgency was not destined to prevail. A democratic Iraq did indeed have a chance to succeed. All

indications were that the enemy, al-Qaeda in particular, was on the run. The Government of Iraq, once paralyzed, was now mounting independent operations at state enemies regardless of their location or sectarian affiliation. The Iraqi people had new hope where once there was none.

TF Marne had launched thirteen division-level operations in its fifteen-months as MND-C. Throughout these operations, the men and women of the TF Marne detained over 5,000 extremists and cleared over 1,800 IEDs and 1,300 caches. In support of economic line of operation, the division energized the economy with over \$190 million supporting 1,474 projects. Local entrepreneurs had received over \$732 thousand for improvements for their businesses in the form of micro-grants. Hospitals, health clinics, and schools were improved. The hard work of planning and conducting both offensive and economic operations brought the most important type of success across the battle space. There was a 90% decrease in all forms of attacks, which resulted in a 23% decrease in civilian casualties (4 Month Average), an 80% decrease in casualties among MND-C Soldiers and a 51% decrease in ISF casualties, (4 Month Average).

The division led more than ten different brigades in battle against insurgents in Mesopotamia. It secured the population of a region that stretched from the border of Saudi Arabia to the border of Iran, an area roughly the size of West Virginia. It conducted an aggressive campaign to restore essential services to the Iraqi people by first bringing them security. It increased the capability of the Iraqi Security Forces it trained and fought alongside. Its partnership with Iraqi Security Forces strengthened the confidence of their soldiers and police alike. The army and police were conducting independent operations on a large scale, providing security to the people around the clock. The

division built a noncommissioned officer academy that graduated hundreds of new leaders annually. In doing so, seeds were planted for success on fertile ground amid a nation with renewed hope.

The advent of the Sons of Iraq had "thickened the force." Nearly forty thousand men were under contract, bringing not just security, but also income for payroll to their families across the country. Of the 246 SoI programs implemented, 211 were Sunni, 20 Shia, and 15 mixed programs - unique in Iraq at the time. Those SoI were extremely effective in turning over caches and IEDs. Their presence was a nightmare come true to the enemies of Iraq's people.

On May 15th, the 3rd HBCT transferred authority to the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Armored Division. In the previous 15 months, Sledgehammer had disrupted AQI and Shia extremists east of Baghdad. It bettered the lives of the people of the Mada'in Qada, restoring law and order. It helped a once intimidated population re-establish a functional seat of government. It restored public health and improved the economy by addressing both the supply of water to the Qada and its quality. The quantity of water capacity for crop irrigation improved by some 400% and quality was increased by 280%. In renovating 25 schools and providing supplies to its faculty and students, the brigade helped restore hope for generations to come. It increased the capability and capacity of the 1st and 3rd National Police Brigade as well as its dignity. The brigade's drive to improve the economy could be seen, heard, and even smelled. The odor of heavy fuel oil wafting through the desert east of Baghdad signaled the return of the Narhwan Brick Factory, literally producing thousands of jobs and the building blocks of a new Iraq every day.

The 2nd BCT was set to transfer authority for its area of

responsibility on July 15th. As part of Operation Marne Pile-driver, the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Airborne assumed responsibility for the hard won ground in Arab Jabour. The Spartans had been the last of the "surge" brigades. It fought and cleared terrorists from Arab Jabour. It restored governance in Arab Jabour, its government center emerging like a Phoenix from the ashes. It pushed south from Baghdad; clearing its sector of the "Baghdad Belts" thereby setting conditions for Iraqis to retain control of neighborhoods with newly founded SoI groups. Under the Spartan Brigade, eight schools opened in Arab Jabour, two with some renovation. A fuel station was opened and 57 micro-grants were issued to local businesses. Hawr Rajab and Arab Jabour would no longer serve as a safe haven for Sunni extremists thanks to the men and women of the Spartan Brigade.

The 3rd CAB was scheduled to transfer authority to another CAB in August. The 3rd CAB had delivered mountains of supplies and moved a division's worth of manpower. It battled relentlessly with insurgents from the time it landed in Iraq until it passed over the horizon in July of 2008. To the enemies of Iraq on the ground, the sound of 3rd CAB's rotor blades foretold certain doom. To the innocent, the Falcons were protectors descending from the skies delivering safety and security.

In May of 2008, the 4th BCT was responsible for the southernmost sector of MND-C's area of responsibility. It had conducted consecutive operations and was set to continue the successes of the 3rd Infantry Division beyond the departure of her sister brigades and the division headquarters. In its area of responsibility, vocational schools were educating Iraq's future technicians. In Iskandariyah, the industrial complex, home to two great state-owned manufacturing companies, employed over 2,000 workers and was on its way to returning to full

capacity. Like its sister brigades, the 4th BCT had amassed an impressive arsenal of captured weapons while building an army of allies in communities throughout the south. At forward bases throughout Mesopotamia, they remained – Vanguards, out front.

Chapter 23

Sustainment of the Marne

Multi-National Division - Center was formed from organic 3rd Infantry Division brigades as well as brigades from its sister divisions. "Modularity" meant the division fought with "plug and play" maneuver brigades. Although each brigade had their own forward logistics battalion for support, logistics above the brigade level flowed from newly designed, modular logistics brigades. The two outstanding logistics brigades that supported Multi-National Division - Center were the 82nd Sustainment Brigade based at Fort Bragg and the 7th Sustainment Brigade from Fort Eustis. In support of MND-C, logisticians mounted up each day and moved north from the brigade's base at Tallil Airbase near Nasiriyah, braving all forms of danger in support of their comrades to the north.

The 3rd Infantry Division's traditional support provider was the 3rd Sustainment Brigade based at Fort Stewart. They de-

ployed separate from the 3rd Infantry Division. Their story demonstrated the agility of the new modular military logistics design and the dedication of its Soldiers, not only to the Marne Division, but the Army as a whole.

Provider

The 3rd Sustainment Brigade "Provider" Headquarters deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in May 2007 without many of its subordinate battalions. Throughout pre-deployment, deployment, and combat operations, the brigade managed the movement of units from home stations to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fort Stewart's 92nd Engineer Battalion deployed to central Iraq in October 2006. The 260th Quartermaster Battalion Headquarters deployed from Hunter Army Airfield to southern Iraq in September 2006, leaving nine subordinate companies on rear detachment. The 385th Military Police Battalion Headquarters deployed from Fort Stewart to Afghanistan in November 2006. The 385th Military Police Battalion deployed two companies to Iraq leaving one company on rear detachment. The 87th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion Headquarters deployed to northern Iraq with two of its five companies in April 2007. The 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion from Fort Benning deployed with two companies in June 2007 to central Iraq.

The brigade was deployed forward, while also performing critical missions at home station. At Fort Stewart, the brigade was called upon to establish and execute the division's Individual Readiness Training (IRT) program which prepared newly arriving Soldiers orientation training prior to deployment.

Upon completion of Iraq theater specific training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, the brigade headquarters moved forward to

Multi-National Division - North (MND-N), FOB Q-West, Iraq. Once there, the brigade conducted Transfer of Authority (TOA) on June 26th, 2007. It had begun its mission to provide sustainment operations, train Iraqi Security Forces in MND-N, provide command and control for FOB Q-West, and provide finance support to MNF-W.

The brigade assumed command and control of seven battalion headquarters. The brigade was comprised of three Combat Sustainment Support Battalions (CSSBs). These three Combat Sustainment Support Battalions were the 87th CSSB, an active duty unit from Fort Stewart, Georgia; the 524th CSSB, an active duty unit from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; and the 143rd CSSB, a National Guard unit from Connecticut. In addition to the CSSBs, the brigade also exercised command and control of the 125th Finance Battalion, an active duty unit from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; the 22nd Personnel Service Battalion, an active duty unit from Fort Lewis; the 2-123rd Armor Battalion, and a National Guard unit from Kentucky.

The 3rd Sustainment Brigade was the first to incorporate the Army's Modular Force design for Human Resource and Finance units. The brigade also had the task of transition management. During their tour in Iraq, the brigade transitioned 116 units and 7,800 soldiers in and out of both theater of operations in the Global War on Terrorism.

On September 15th, 2007, the brigade underwent significant changes. Although the number of battalions remained the same, several units were replaced. The task organization reflected a change of two of the Combat Sustainment Support Battalions. The Finance Battalion was replaced by the 82nd Financial Management Company. With the replacement of the 2-123rd Armor Battalion, Base Defense/Force Protection and Mayor's Cell duties were assumed by two battalion headquarters: the 1-175th

Infantry, a National Guard unit from Maryland and the 332nd Rear Operations Center, a National Guard unit from Wisconsin.

The major MND-North operations during the September-October time frame were Operation Snake Charmer and Operation Lightning Hammer II. The purpose of Operation Snake Charmer was to defeat IED Cells in Southern Salah Ad Din in order to exploit recent success against AQI and enhance security. Operation Lightning Hammer II focused operations in the greater Lake Thar Thar region. The task was to destroy elements of AQI in order to degrade enemy capability, support reconciliation efforts, and set the conditions for TF Iron (1st AD) to retain the initiative. Both operations were successful in that they contributed to the reduction in the placement of IEDs.

During September and October, the Brigade executed 675 Combat Logistics Patrols, drove nearly 1.3 million miles on Iraq's most dangerous roads, executed more than 14,600 Transportation Movement Requests, issued approximately 16 million gallons of JP8, 700 thousand gallons of MOGAS, 6.6 million gallons of diesel, and conducted 60 recovery missions.

The Brigade conducted a total of eight operational moves in September. Five of the moves were conducted by the 927 CSSB. The most daunting of these was 927 CSSB's move of the 3-9 Iraqi Army from Taji to Basra. In an effort to continuously clear backlogs and meet other mission requirements, the 927 CSSB ran an average of five or more Combat Logistics patrols between Q-West and Camp Speicher daily. In mid-September, the 87th CSSB conducted a tactical move to East Marez in an effort to provide better command and control throughout MND-N. This move allowed the Brigade to have its three CSSBs spread throughout MND-N, one in the northern sector, one in the center, and one in the southern half of MND-N. This move also provided positive interface between each the 87th's

battalion commanders and the commanders they supported.

The Brigade had Soldiers located at thirteen Forward Operating Bases: Q-West, Speicher, Marez, Sykes, Warrior, Zayton, Habur Gate, Al Asad, Ramadi, TQ, Taji, Al Kindi, and Al Kasik. Battalion headquarters were located at Q-West, Speicher, Marez, and Anaconda. Soldiers from these units provided support to approximately 34 additional locations throughout MND-N, MND-B and MNF-W.

The 3rd Sustainment Brigade continued its magnificent support throughout the fall and winter of 2007-2008. During this time frame, Provider conducted 335 Combat Logistics Patrols, drove over 765 thousand miles, issued nine million gallons of JP8 gas, 320 thousand gallons of Mogas, 2.1 million gallons of diesel and produced over 650 thousand cases of bottled water. It increased the Q-West stocks to 50 days of supply, issued 7 thousand cases of Meals Ready to Eat, provided showers for 2,500 Soldiers and civilians, and conducted 18 recovery missions.

The 92 Engineer Battalion re-deployed in late October 2007. November of that year saw the redeployment of the 260 Quartermaster Battalion while the 385 Military Police Battalion redeployed in February 2008. The 3d Sustainment Brigade would bring their distinguished performance in OIF to a close in August 2008 when it was scheduled to transfer authority with the 16th Sustainment Brigade.

Chapter 24

Conclusion

The 3rd Infantry Division answered the call to duty in the winter of 2007. During its third Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment, it saw the transition of a nation on the brink of civil war to a nation with renewed hope and stability. By the summer of 2008, the enemy of the Iraqi people was on the run.

Just as it had in World War I, Dog Face Soldiers had held the line to protect the national capitol of its new ally in the war on terror. The scenic backdrop of the European countryside had been exchanged for the heat, dust and uncertainty of insurgent warfare, but the onslaught of a determined enemy was the same. And as they had done 90 years earlier, by protecting Paris, Dog Face Soldiers had distinguished themselves in battle as part of a great task force at war. Moreover, they gave hope to a people where little had existed before. For the third time in four years, the 3rd Infantry Division lived up

to its name. In the years that follow, 2007 and 2008 will be known as the time that made a difference in Iraq. And it was all made possible by men and women who, rather than read history, chose to make history.

Rock of the Marne!

